

HARDING

THE

MONEY-SPINNER





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HARDING THE MONEY-SPINNER.



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BY

MILES GERALD KEON,

AUTHOR OF "DION AND THE SIBYLS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1879.

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PRINTED AT THE CAXTON PRESS, BECCLES.

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HARDING THE MONEY-SPINNER.

CHAPTER I.

“For fear was on the bold.”

Not moving from where he stood, and only half turning his head, he saw Sir Walter walk hastily to the telegraph office. Cuthbert made up his mind. When Sir Walter emerged from the office, he met young Harding face to face.

After the greeting—which, on Sir Walter’s side, was unaffectedly kind; on Cuthbert’s warm and respectful—the young man said, hesitatingly—

“I was on the point of writing to you,

Sir Walter : will you favour me with half a minute's private conversation ? ”

Sir Walter looked at him attentively, and replied—

“ I was going to drive back by Throstle-dale ; will you get into the carriage ? I have only my little Henrietta with me.”

“ I would sooner you had the whole petty sessions Bench ! ” exclaimed Cuthbert, in sudden alarm. “ I mean,” added he, hastily, “ so far as mentioning, before her, the subject on which I would trouble you.”

“ Oh ! Then, as you please,” answered the baronet, with the least possible look of surprise, and the greatest possible look of haughtiness.

It was, however, a haughtiness quite at home in the impressive and handsome face, not especially (at least, not consciously) meant to wither Cuthbert. That young person was not easily withered, yet he felt exceedingly uneasy, and taxed his mind

to divine how the exclamation of which he had been guilty could have given displeasure.

That displeasure, as has been hinted, was not pointed or direct, but vague. It was of this kind. In Sir Walter Mandeville's mind, little Henrietta Mandeville was, of course, nothing to Mr. Cuthbert Harding; yet, in Mr. Cuthbert Harding's mind, it seems, she was something to that young gentleman—a rather curious notion to so much as pass through this youth's brain. Hence the slight surprise, and the great haughtiness. But the poor lad had small experience; he was very quick, and would pick up a due estimate of social relations soon enough. Hence the kind and even half tender manner which immediately succeeded the transient, unconscious glance of pride.

“Let me give orders,” pursued Sir Walter, in the mean time, to my coachman.”

“Permit me, first,” said Cuthbert, (sure as intuition, and rapid as the lightning, about what he ought to do, yet dark as Erebus respecting the why)—“permit me, first, to take my hat off to the—to Miss Henrietta, and to convey to her the thanks of my sister.”

And he ran to the carriage—where, graceful, pensive, sat, like a little queen, the fair child, inebriated with the bright and glorious sunshine which quivered over the abounding woods. Her large, dreamy eyes were beaming with gentle thoughts and fancies in themselves poetry, and she seemed rapt, as only a frail organization can be rapt, by the sole beauty of the day. The stouter nature which withstands the depression, is also a stranger to the cheer of mere atmospheric influences. There were a thousand infinitesimal sounds, characteristic of summer and of busy morning, blended into an indistinct murmur or hum ; the long-continued

roll of the carriage wheels had ceased ; and the child's ear now reposed upon the softness of the half silence as upon a pillow ; her thoughts gliding forth at the invitation of Guess, to hunt for the perch of the cuckoo, the rounded melody of whose sonorous note came swelling from the neighbouring glades. But he mocked the out-travelled questing spirit of the sweet child. He changed his place shamefully ; he changed it also by enchantment. The alert imagination flew towards him on the left ; and, lo ! he was now on the right. Ah ! she would have found him, in the end, only for Master Cuthbert. She was so abstracted that she did not perceive that gentleman at first. She was in chase of the cuckoo, far away. She did not know of, she did not think of, what was coming in life, did she ? that musing little queen—that dear, graceful child ! How is it, that some of these children of our aristocracy

look so much more graceful and queen-like, in the youthful and beautiful mother's carriage, than that charming mother, despite the pomp of mastery, the bloom that has attained its perfection, and the elegance of fully-taught life knowledge? Perhaps the grace here alluded to, and the queenliness of manner, go with something else. Sometimes they stay till the end; but that is rare."

"I am so delighted," cried Henrietta, "that the bouquet pleased Winnifrid. If I knew her favourite flowers, I would ask her to call them hers."

After a proper acknowledgment of this, Cuthbert, who had leant upon the door of the barouche, withdrew a pace, nodding and smiling; he then looked at Sir Walter, who turned to the coachman, and said—

"To Throstledale; a foot pace. I wish to speak with Mr. Harding. We will follow by the carriage road."

The high-stepping blood bays pranced round, and bore the light burden of Henrietta and her airy meditations with the slow majesty of restrained curvetings, and an impatient walk, to the wood-belted, bough-fanned, summer road, and along the trembling fretwork which the shadows of the green leaves overhead flung upon the white dust below.

Sir Walter and young Harding followed at an easy sauntering pace.

"Geoffrey is quite well, I hope, Sir Walter," remarked Cuthbert, clearing his throat.

"Perfectly. He leaves the Duke of Man's this day."

A silence followed. In half a minute Sir Walter broke it.

"You wished to speak with me, Mr. Harding?" said he, kindly.

Cuthbert felt dizzy. He wished Sir Walter had been another highwayman,

holding in his hand another long shiny barrel ; he wished his own present task had been to tame and conquer another Bucephalus ; above all, he wished he had written the letter.

“ Yes,” said he, slowly, while he inwardly summoned all the energies of his spirit to the van of the unseen peril—“ yes, Sir Walter ; my father and I, but especially I myself, have to thank you for a noble offer.”

“ Do not say anything about that,” returned the princely gentleman. “ I was almost afraid of being guilty of forwardness or intrusion, should I make the offer. Once made, it grieves me only that it should not have been available.”

How was this ? Cuthbert felt that the tone of the conversation was escaping from him to a great distance—that it was insensibly settling upon a higher level than at all suited his design.

“Since my father went into trade, he has been very sensitive——”

“Ah ! there it is !” exclaimed Sir Walter. “I dreaded wounding his honourable susceptibility. It was my only dread.”

“My father, I fear, Sir Walter, allowed that inward trouble to be half seen. But his letter, I assure you, had but one object, one only object—to show an appreciation of your goodness to—to his son ; for it was, after all, I—it was I, who had the good fortune to excite your generous interest.”

“All well won by your own conduct,” said the baronet.

“Believe me, Sir Walter,” pursued young Harding, “that my father, however sensitive, felt no pain whatever blended with those warm feelings which it was right to express to you at once—right that you should hear declared on our part, before any other word was spoken ; in short, before I either wrote to you, or requested my

present interview. And it was so done, therefore."

"I am truly glad," observed Sir Walter, "that I have not given pain."

"Quite impossible," returned Cuthbert. "Your own delicacy of sentiment was my father's buckler. You did not come a great gentleman to a struggling tradesman, and say to him, in his declining years, 'Mr. William Harding, your brewery wants help to save you from bankruptcy; here are twelve hundred pounds for you!'"

Sir Walter started.

"Such a thought never entered my head," said he, quickly; "I spoke but of your commission in a cavalry regiment."

"Exactly, Sir Walter," returned Cuthbert. "A cornet's commission would have cost that sum. Once more, let me assure you that both I and my father are entirely without words to express the thanks we would offer you. It seemed to Mr. Harding

doubtful, whether he ought to permit you to throw away so immense a sum on the advancement in life of a lad who was already paid for having—having—in fine, for what he did. Paid, that is, by the joy he felt in that good fortune itself. This is not pride, Sir Walter,” added Cuthbert, hastily, “and far less is it insensibility, on my father’s part.”

“Oh !” said the other. “I quite understand. You need not say another word.”

“Nor shall I, about my father,” replied Cuthbert ; “now for myself. The offer was not made to him ; there was no question about his getting a commission. It was to me, in a more direct and immediate manner, that your noble and kind suggestion referred. In any case, my father would have consulted my wishes entirely ; but here he had, naturally, not even a choice ; to me accordingly he left the decision. It is with deep and heartfelt gratitude, after

due reflection, that I accept this offer—on one condition.”

“Oh, then, you will go into the army?” exclaimed the baronet, greatly surprised.

“Not precisely that,” said Cuthbert; “at least, if I have rightly understood your wishes. Another, in my place, might at once have accepted the commission, after taxing, not merely your purse to buy it, but also your interest to get it, and then he might have sold out on the first opportunity. He would thus, at all events, have secured something to sell. But I prefer to be frank with so noble a friend.”

Sir Walter bowed slightly, and said nothing.

“First, Sir Walter,” resumed Cuthbert, “am I right in supposing that the pecuniary outlay is not the only one? that there is also what I have heard to be at least as precious, I mean an expenditure of interest?”

“Pray do not consider that,” returned Sir Walter. “For the rest, my interest would lie idle.”

Yet Cuthbert had imagined this would prove a very weighty consideration. As a general principle, it would. It was by no means stupid in the youth.

“I am right, then,” responded Cuthbert ; “the favour, the service, is just twice as great as it looks. One other question—was it not your intention to do me good? It was nothing to you what profession I might follow ; that was a matter, in itself, of comparative indifference to the benefactor. In short, your object was not to select my calling for me, but to show your kindness.”

“I certainly did not mean to dictate your calling.”

When Cuthbert heard this he exclaimed—

“Because I would, to-morrow even, enter the army (which I abhor), rather than not prove my gratitude in the best, the only

worthy, manner, by freely and decisively accepting your munificent offer, Sir Walter ; and, accordingly, I do now accept it—that is, on one condition, as I have already said. This condition is, that you will permit me to regard the sum in question—the—the twelve hundred pounds—as a loan. I happen to have just discovered a means of turning it to such an account as will straight found my fortune.”

Sir Walter knew he was not dealing with a fool, who might say and might think this unreasonably or hastily. He reflected for a few moments and said—

“I will send your father, then, a cheque this day. Good morning,” added he, quickly, “and success to you.”

Hastily offering his hand, he left Cuthbert transfixed in the middle of the road.

CHAPTER II.

“Nor, till the fact was past philosophizing,
Saith he, ‘That’s Hydra, there is no disguising.’”
King Arthur.

YOUNG Harding had not been long in executing the little plan, the formation and accomplishment of which occupied the close of our last chapter. But he was far from considering the transaction “an operation.” On the contrary, some operations might now begin. That was a mere brand saved unexpectedly out of the burning. That was a mere affair which had only to be touched, and it marched of its own accord ; a very excellent bit of luck, spontaneous and superogatory.

“The old village schoolmaster,” thought he, “who first taught me to write, before the grandesse days when Uncle Marlowe preached himself into a fat rectory, and took his little unbroken nephew by the hand, used to say of any pet pen which he had just made, as he handed it to me—‘there’s a pen that will write of itself.’ Well, here was a business which walked of itself. It walked to Lea Meadows, and my father was sending it away again. But I had only to call it back, and, of course, I have called it, and back it comes. We can’t make our opportunities, can we? But, at least, we can take advantage of them swiftly, resolutely, undauntedly, as they arise, eh? The very least we can do is, not to spoil them; not to spend a life in throwing them away, in being inaccessible to their advances. We need not do that, need we? Come often, my pets; I’ll not be rude with you; come, ay, come this way, my darlings; I will not

damp your good-will. Thank you, dear father; but if that be the manner in which you have managed your brewery, no wonder it has not prospered."

While thus meditating, he stood still, looking down upon the dust-white road.

"An enormous stroke of luck to set out with," pursued he, mentally; "yet, not all merely luck, neither! That evening, at Huntingferry, there was as little time as there is in a battle to think and to act, and yet I thought and acted. Would everybody have done the same? Geoffrey is above the average, and in what state was he?"

Nemesis, which is only the old classic name for the law of compensation which rules this world, roughly equalizing the lots of mortals, and forcing, in a thousand unknown and little-suspected cases, those who are envied down to those who envy them--Nemesis, I say, has a persistent, although a sneaking, regard for her flighty cousin, Luck.

And they who, in prosperity, love to ascribe little to fortune and much to their own deserts, either receive at once, each time, a salutary slap in the face, and are thereby made wise, or else a tremendous revenge is kept in reserve for them by the indignant personage I have mentioned—I mean, by Nemesis. It is just the contrary in adversity. Fortune does not like the names people call her when they are in a scrape, and ten to one if she do not either keep them there, or take them out of it to let them find their way into a worse. Everybody knows (because Lord Bacon made it new again) the story of the all-prevailing, all-conquering old Greek, who became so spoiled and conceited that, one day, in a speech which he made in the market-place, having recapitulated his various achievements one after the other, he paused at each to remark—“and in this also, you perceive—and in this, and in this—fortune had no share.” No ; it was

all his own individual merit. Well, he never had one turn of luck afterwards. All went wrong with him in the sequel. Under his management, from that day forward, everything failed. He had denied his fallibility, and it became forthwith an infallible characteristic of his. The fact is, that he spoke too loud ; and, though he thought he was addressing merely his countrymen, the Athenians, that sensitive power whom I have named—the cousin of both good and evil fortune—the supposed “Nemesis,” overheard him. Had he merely thought within himself what he said aloud, he would have been similarly overheard.

Cuthbert was not quite so self-worshipful as he stood on that delightful rural highway, notwithstanding the promptitude with which he had achieved his little plan.

But would it serve to allow this cheque of which Sir Walter spoke, to reach his father's hands, or even his father's know-

ledge? At the very least, young Harding considered that young Harding ought to be at home before the cheque arrived.

He was still rooted to the ground in profound thought, when he felt as if a spear had pierced his back. Yet it was only the light, kind arm of Sir Walter Mandeville, who had returned, and had touched him on the shoulder.

“I was wounded last night by a highwayman,” said Cuthbert, as an apology for the sharp cry which had involuntarily escaped him.

“Really, I hope I have not hurt you. I should like much to hear the story of your adventure. My motive in coming back is to offer you a seat in the barouche, if you are going my way.”

“Thanks, many thanks,” said Cuthbert; “but I expect a telegraph message from London, and I cannot well leave this neighbourhood till it arrives.”

“ Ah ! ” replied Sir Walter, smiling, “ and it was to send one I came. It rains the same kind of rain, at about the same time, for a good number of persons, over a given space. The world is not so big as it seems.”

Cuthbert stared. Each of the two last remarks would have required a long comment to do the sense of it justice, or, at least, to put it into language on a level with the ordinary style of thinking. Each of the observations was a little book.

They were yet in conversation, when Sir Walter, whose face looked up the road in the direction of the sun, shaded his eyes with his hand. Cuthbert turned. A horseman was approaching at a slow pace. About fifty yards behind rode a servant on a much better steed, as is often the case, when the master has reached “ the grand climacteric.” The old English baron’s dashing eldest son takes a pride in being well mounted, even on the road ; but the old English baron

himself, unless he chance to be like our brilliant friend Algernon's father, Mr. Otway Childering, takes a pride rather in mounting his groom well. "Notice this animal," would the youth say to you, if he spoke his thought. "Observe that animal," is all the senior would demand.

"Why, that is Mr. Rosebriar!" exclaimed Sir Walter, "and I have been supposing that he was in London."

The interjection partook more of the nature of a soliloquy than of conversation; and, at this moment, the subject of it came up.

His appearance was somewhat remarkable. He wore a white hat, a green coat (the buttons cloth-covered), and wide nankeen trousers. It was evident, at a glance, that he was what is called "well off," if not opulent; probably, had a country establishment somewhere near. The dress, the horses, the groom following him, the leisurely pace,

were all a large handbill for this sort of conclusion. But it was a very rudimentary, alphabetic, first-thought view—it was, in short, what anybody would say at once.

Cuthbert saw all this ; and yet, as though there were still something else less legible about the man, he kept his eyes fastened on him while he exchanged greetings with Sir Walter Mandeville.

Mr. Rosebriar, as the baronet had called him, looked about forty ; a little less, or a little more. He was a spare person, with a pale countenance, in which might be traced a peculiar expression. “Anxious” would be too strong a word for it. The eyes had a certain eagerness in their gaze, and every now and then a character of hesitation flitted over the physiognomy. It was what might be termed an educated face, and not deficient in elegance or refinement. The individual was far from having the air of a fool, and he had not the talk

of a fool. Yet something exceedingly unpleasant (to Cuthbert's mind) resulted from the combination of that eager—nay, almost hungry, look about the eyes, with that transient but frequent evidence of a hesitating or faltering disposition, which, as I have said, crossed the features, rather than stayed there.

“A sharp and clever mind,” said young Harding to himself, “but still a weak one; and, as to the moral part, is it that he is a coward? Not, perhaps, in the most obvious sense. Somewhere, however, I feel convinced, he has a dented and battered place in the daily life armour—battered into holes, probably. A weak man at heart, I am certain!”

Such was the reading of this individual come to very quickly by Master Cuthbert, who was not a learned young gentleman, but men were his books. And the—no, not uneasy, but—eager, hungry eye of the

opulent stranger, whose groom had halted fifty yards off, played occasionally over Cuthbert, while the possessor of that eye chatted with Sir Walter.

“What a contrast,” thought Cuthbert, “to the foreigner I just now saw on the platform of the railway! what a contrast especially in this one particular—the settled keen eye and the hesitating keen eye—the conscious strength and steadfast greatness of the look, and this periodical look of littleness, or feebleness, or something very like it!”

Cuthbert continued thus to muse, acutely idle, observantly at rest.

And the eager, hungry eye perused him again and again, as the subject of his meditation still conversed with Sir Walter.

“Yes, Sir Walter,” he said, in reply to something, “it is a change since you and I were at the university together. But I never was fit for what is called the country

gentleman's life. Yet, on the other hand, the iron factory does not suit me either. Not that it has failed in my management. I have nothing to complain of. But I wash my hands of business now. That is, for the present. I have got the capital safe out of it again, after paying me full eight per cent. for these several years. It was a good thing."

"Why quit it?" asked the baronet, smiling.

"Well," said the other, "I am tired of it. One never knows what may happen. A man has been looking at it. He of the Limes—the man, Brompton——"

Cuthbert felt at once interested by this name.

"A sure bidder. Selfish, clever, shrewd man!" pursued the stranger. "Would not give a penny over anything's price. Well, he said he would pay positively more than I even thought the business would have fetched."

“A good proof,” observed Sir Walter, “that it is worth staying in.”

“But a good opportunity for leaving it, eh?” replied the other. “It was this business which brought me from town in such a hurry. I have seen this man Brompton; he is a maid of all work, by-the-by, collects the beauty’s rents in Cumberland for Dr. Harding——”

Cuthbert started.

The eager, hungry eye surveyed him. The beauty! Who but one?

“I asked him, was it true,” continued the possessor of that eye, “that he wished to get the factory. ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘if the price suited him.’ I named the one which I had been informed he was ready to give. I had been misinformed. He told me that ‘he would not have himself quoted as a person of two bids,’ that was his phrase; ‘that he had already been heard to say what sum he would give, and by that sum he would

abide.' Eccentric old chap ! And he actually proffered me a higher amount, higher by four hundred pounds. Not much in thousands, you know, Sir Walter. But still, there it was ; a better offer than the offer which was better than my own expectations !”

“ I suppose,” remarked Sir Walter, “ that Mr. Brompton sees how to make the business more profitable than you ever were able to render it yourself.”

“ No doubt,” responded the stranger, with a frown ; and as he mused, his eager, hungry eye fluttered again around Cuthbert, like a bird that would not settle.

At the same time, Cuthbert noticed an amused expression in the countenance of Sir Walter, who now said—

“ Of course, as you came from town expressly to secure even a smaller price than that which was thus placed so handsomely within your reach, you instantaneously closed with this man's offer ? ”

“ Oh ! dear me, no,” replied the other.
“ What do you take me for ? ”

“ Why not ? ” asked Sir Walter.

“ Well, one never knows, you know,” said Mr. Rosebriar.

And the hungry, eager eye devoured vacancy.

Sir Walter smiled.

“ How is my—— ” demanded Mr. Rosebriar.

Cuthbert did not catch the last word ; for while the speaker hesitated and hummed, hand on chin, in an absent way, the baronet answered him at once by—

“ Quite well. There she is, in the carriage.”

Sir Walter Mandeville now nodded to Cuthbert cheerfully ; and saying, “ Your father shall hear from me to-morrow,” walked by the side of the stranger’s horse, which moved forward at a foot pace, in the direction of the carriage.

That "to-morrow" was an inexpressible relief to Cuthbert. He had resolved to give orders at the station to forward the telegraphic message at once to Lea Meadows ; and he had intended himself forthwith, in order to gain the same destination, to remount the gig, and to command Mr. Harry Panton to extract something more of action from the tranquil Bessy ; which enjoinder failing, he would take the reins in his own hands. It would never do, he reflected, to let Sir Walter's letter be received by Mr. William Harding, unapprised, unexpected. It might not even answer to let him receive it at all. But that could be settled by intermediate consideration. However, as affairs had turned out, there was no longer any need to hasten thus his own flight home again. His excellent father would not (for this day at least) have the opportunity of sending good luck from the door, when good luck came so courteously of its own accord.

This point determined, his thoughts took another turn. "Mr. Sweetbriar's what?" wondered Cuthbert. "What was it of his that this anxious-faced gentleman factory owner called 'the sweet child?' What is Henrietta Mandeville to him? Well, and what is that to me?"

He tried now to dismiss the whole matter from his mind. He felt rather weak, and, as the heat was sensibly increasing, he sat down on the mossy bank by the side of the road, under a beautifully spreading, magnificent horse-chestnut tree. Once out of the direct blaze, the sunshine appeared to him only the more glorious.

He had secured twelve hundred pounds, besides the two hundred which he expected for his shares. Ah! it was heavenly weather. How pleasant the rustle of the leaves, how mellow the note of the mysterious cuckoo whose position had puzzled Henrietta, how sweet and balmy the air,

how fragrant the wild violets, or something—how, how—fourteen hundred!—why it was a landscape, a climate—fourteen hundred, and then what his father would give him! Oh, what could be more picturesque than the outlines of yonder windmill? And, look up, what a bower the horse-chestnut tree made overhead! Probably, in all, two thousand, two thousand to begin with; think of that, and see what endings he would obtain from such beginnings! Ah! that mingled song of many birds, those sylvan lights and shadows, that lacework of the twigs in the great branching vault above him. All nature was at peace, wasn't she? More; she was at holiday. What beauty of aspect, what breathing joy every where around, what harmony of gentle sounds, from the insects in the grass, to the feathered wanderers of the middle sky? Earth seemed heaven, or heaven was on earth.

But a change came o'er the spirit of his dream. He now began to ponder on the queer trick which Mr. Bradworth had played him; taking the whole amount on each share, instead of the professed deposit, or earnest, of a quarter the amount. To Cuthbert it was, in regard to profit, exactly and strictly the same thing. The shares were now at a premium, and he could not have realized a fraction more than that premium, whatever it was, whether the shares were paid-up shares or otherwise. The only difference was, that the odd ninety-five pounds had passed the interval in Mr. Bradworth's pocket-book, instead of in Cuthbert's. Had Cuthbert paid only the deposit for five shares (that is, thirty pounds), he would now be entitled, on selling, to fully as much as he was actually to receive.

“Hollo!” cried he, suddenly, “there is some confusion here! Very true; had merely the deposit for five shares been taken,

I should now get as much as I shall get. But why take the whole amount, and tell me it was but a deposit—nay, insist so much on his own kindness in being prepared to ‘stump up for me,’ as he elegantly said? Was it that he wanted to make the favour appear the greater, when he was actually doing for me much less than he had it in his power to do? Ah! I’ll be even with you some day, Mr. Bradworth! I’ll be even with you! That sum, even by your own emphasis respecting the duty of being ready to pay up, was really but a deposit, and entitled me to twenty shares instead of five!”

And, as he leaned, with the unwounded shoulder, against the horse chestnut tree, looking extremely calm, there was yet something in his glittering eye which a judge of character would not have relished, would not have complimented himself on having provoked.

“But it is inexplicable—it is as dark as night,” pursued the youth, mentally. “It is a pitch black puzzle! What motive could he have had? A millionaire! Why, it is as if I were to put my hand in a child’s pocket to steal his gingerbread nuts, after dining at Sir Walter Mandeville’s! What are the odd fifteen shares, at six pounds five per share deposit, to the man who, at this moment, can manufacture almost as many as he likes with a scrape of his pen? No, no, no; it is too absurd.”

While he thus pondered, he opened his pocket-book and took out the scrip, which he had never once thought it worth while to examine.

He uttered an abrupt exclamation. There they were, staring him in the face—twenty shares.

“Ah! to be sure,” said he. “A deposit of six pounds five shillings the share. Then, what did that porpoise mean by his rigma-

role about stumping up and forking out? Was he quizzing me? Only think of that! He thought it an exquisite piece of fun that he should assume, even for argument's sake, the possibility of his paying anything for a young cub fresh from Eton. Ah! well—no matter; he has acted handsomely by me; he is welcome to his wit. He would, by-the-by, have had much more to pay than he said—if the shares were below par this day—only, in that case, he would not have paid—that's true! It was on theory, as he remarked. Exquisite fun! 'There would not be any occasion, you know,' said he. Charming! And he would not even take the trouble to enlighten me as to the number of shares by which I was enriched, nor the extent of this theoretic liability of his. No; he left me in the muddle in which he found me. Doubtless, it was a treat to him to contemplate my exultant simplicity; he would not disturb it for the world. It was

a pleasing picture of innocence to his mind. And I bragging about my betting-book at Eton! 'The book's the man, sir, is it?' Why, he was laughing at me! I thought I noticed something equivocal about his sniggle. But, never mind, that book was a reality, for all the magnificent and pitying calmness of his sneer. That book procured me these shares, and these shares shall procure me thousands upon thousands—and that is but a beginning. So, don't be in a hurry, dear Mr. Bradworth, to sniggle superior. You are sixty—I am not twenty. Before I am half your age, I'll undertake to buy you and all you are worth in the morning, and not count it into my day's work, when I tot it up at night. The man who saves pennies and the man who makes pounds are two. We both belong to the latter kind, with a difference."

This time, the so-called Nemesis was displeased—nay, seriously and deeply indig-

nant. "Thou knowest," said Hannibal's brother, Asdrubal, to Hannibal. "how to gain, but not how to use, a victory." This, indeed, was for stopping too soon in the midst of success; but there are others equally misled in not knowing where to stop.

"Besides," pursued Cuthbert, in the unwonted exhilaration and self-glorying of his thoughts, "who would have Mr. Bradworth's money to be Mr. Bradworth? A pretty chance his for an Emily Whitsund's hand—ay, or for any real social distinction whatever! Take him at any age. 'Tis true, they worshipped as he walked—but what? It is true, he toddles and stumps about as though a divinity. But look at him in the House of Commons!—look even behind him as he struts past you in a great private house. The very menials feel their superiority, and giggle. He turns—they are decorous. He retires—they are obstreperous.

He looks at them—they are black in the face. He turns away—they relieve themselves in a burst of unanimous and genuine derision. If he speaks, they choke ; when he is gone, they roar with laughter, and so save their lives. And if he is not for himself, nor with sincerity, admired or respected—is he loved ? And yet why not, poor man ? He is not a bad fellow ; he has given me the twenty shares.”

Cuthbert thus mused, and, as he mused, a name continued to buzz in his ears like an air of music which a person wishes to brush out of his head in vain. This happens to people every day ; but, generally, the individual haunted by the importunate recollection is not in his most robust state of health at the time. Sometimes it is an air of music, as I have said, or part of one, the fag end of a tune ; often it is a word, a proverb ; somebody’s remarkable, or not remarkable, exclamation ; sometimes it is a

name. Cuthbert was rendered less insensible to these troublesome little impressions by the weakness consequent on the effusion of blood from his shoulder. It is the more singular that he should, at present, be followed by the fluttering and the buzzing of this name in particular, because he had it wrong in his memory. It was the name of Mr. Rosebriar. This person he—or rather, that other self whom we all have inside of us, and whom *De Maistre*, in his wonderful “Journey round my Room,” actually terms “t’Other” (*l’Autre*)—this person, I say, Cuthbert or Cuthbert’s other self, persisted in calling Sweetbriar—“Mr. Sweetbriar.” And, at intervals, during the whole time of the musing which has been related, this name, “Sweetbriar, Mr. Sweetbriar,” continued to hammer upon the tympanum of his mind’s ear. (The mind may as well be said to have an ear, I suppose, as to have an eye.)

“How is it,” thought Cuthbert, “that Sir Walter never introduced me, although I was standing there, during their conversation? I presume, such is the way in these great circles. Well, hang this Sweetbriar! what is he to me? I’ll get him out of my head; the name keeps buzzing at me like a gadfly.”

He was as good as his word. By a powerful effort of his will, he fairly dashed that gadfly, as he called it, aside; and it was a very long time—it was several years—before he again heard that name, or one which it resembled. When he did, he vainly strove to recall the present hour. It was too deeply packed down and heaped over by the lumber and the mass of intervening events and later transactions, to come forth from its little hiding-place at the call of a jaded and weary memory.

CHAPTER III.

“My lord, I answered, with unquailing brow,
Not to such ears should youth its faults avow.”

New Timon.

A VERY curious case of eavesdropping occurred that morning, before young Harding went for his telegraphic message.

With a start, Cuthbert now looked at his watch, and, of course, found it still “the same drunk,” the same three o’clock. It was more easily restored than its master would have been, if he had similarly stopped. While winding it at leisure, before returning to the station for Falconer’s answer, Cuthbert reviewed the circumstances which the casual disablement of his watch naturally recalled.

“Although,” thought he, “the face of that handsome fellow who saved the station-master’s child just now, seemed not wholly strange to me, yet it is, ten to one, only my fancy. I could not have had a good view of the youth who, last night, saved me. I do not know that there is here but one and the same individual; they are two distinct persons probably, nor can I even be sure, again, that either of them is this Algernon. It, certainly, would be like a rebuke to me from—from something unseen, were he who has preserved my life to be the very person whose life I swore to have.”

He rose and sauntered slowly back towards the station, along the shaded road, his hands crossed behind him, in the manner in which he had seen Mr. Bradworth cross his. This was not by way of imitating the illustrious man, but because that carriage happened to be the least painful.

“Surely,” thought young Harding, as he

thus advanced, "he cannot have had the luck to save from violent death two lives in succession within twenty-four hours. That would be strange! And yet, as Sir Walter says, it rains the same kind of rain, *et cetera*. This would make him twice as great a favourite with Emily."

Cuthbert looked about him, as one does in expectation of a shower.

"It seems not to be such delicious weather as it was a few minutes ago," thought he. "Everything was then so balmy; it is less bright, less delicious, or something. This youngster appears to be born to eclipse me. Ah! there is one thing, at least, in which he shall be himself eclipsed; one thing in which men shall talk of Harding, not of Childering; one thing wherein I shall have no rival of that sort. Power is the lady to woo, and there is no power like money; in able hands, that is. Power is the lady to wed; the power of money—in the right

hands—can accomplish anything. We are sordid, forsooth, if we value money above intellectual gifts ; yet how, and for what, are we ourselves valued by those who tell us of the difference ? They are right who tell us so—and they don't know it, the hypocrites ! They are right, and they don't know it. Intellectual gifts may, indeed, be more worth and more mighty than money—for, by their own prostitution, they can even command it. But what do these canters and dolts mean ? Do they mean that they value intellectual gifts as much as they value money's condition, money's appurtenances, money's very appearance ? No ; for when they see wealth, they at once fall down and worship, no matter even if it be marked by the glaring want of everything else ; nor dare they let the vile rich man know that they complain of him for doing just what they do themselves, that is for valuing those riches which render him, not,

indeed, adorable, but still adored. No ; it is of him who has yet to gain his money that they complain ; it is against him that they cry out, if he show any tendency to prefer wealth to these other things of which they speak ; and thus, if he be a coward, they keep him from ever becoming an object of their own cult. Because he is poor, they call shame on him, that he should be so anxious to get rich : while, if he is fool enough to listen to them, they despise him all his life. But suppose he be wise enough to disdain them, they make a god of him for his sage contempt of them—for nothing less, for nothing more—and never call shame on him after. Ah ! vile crew of self-deceiving canters, I know the bride to woo : yes, Uncle Marlowe, leader of that crew ! and I know the other bride whom you would then fling into my arms—although for a morganatic match, so far as the priority of the heart's regard would be involved."

Cuthbert had come to speak aloud, and he was overheard, though he knew it not.

“*I* had not thus regarded my radiant-minded Emily, uncle, till you taught me, by that cruel, that unprovoked, that public insult, so, even so, to regard her : yes, that worst form of insult, cruellest species of publicity ; insult before her, publicity before my school friend, my little sister, my father, my mother, and the lady who was plighted to me and whom I loved. And he a scholar, and he a Christian, and he a divine ! Divine, indeed ! He told me that I was not one of those persons whose love was a favour to the object of it—that these grand hopes, or self flatteries, should be left to those youths who are rich ; yet, he is all for the intellectual and the inward above the accidental and the external ! No ! arrogant, self-deceiving canter, you are not. If, abounding in treasures, I ever come and manage that the crime of an enormous virtual simony shall be com-

mitted for your ecclesiastical promotion—if, for decorously contrived, but practical and real, money value, I can, and do, 'purchase—yes, purchase you the episcopacy—no, no maiden will be too good then to reward the bold and able sinner's sin; you who gave your conscience for your rectory, will readily give fifty fair wards for your bishopric."

"Ahem!" was sonorously uttered close to Cuthbert's ear.

The young man, without starting in the least, turned with a cold and haughty countenance, and beheld his uncle, whose presence he had 'previously noticed upon the platform of the railway.

"You forget the old proverb, nephew, that trees have ears."

"Pardon me, Uncle Marlowe, I knew that you were somewhere about," replied Cuthbert, with quite a lofty look of self-possession. "If you mean that you are the tree who have ears, I divined your presence."

“I should not have thought it, nephew, from the few broken words I caught,” faltered the great preacher.

“You are fond of a classical reference,” said his nephew, “and, therefore, I may inform you that, like Socrates, I have a demon, or familiar, who whispers to me all sorts of odd information.”

“Well, jests apart, how is it I meet you here to-day?”

“That is a secret of state, uncle. When you begin to take a more indulgent sort of interest in me, you shall know more. At present, you are austere; as befits, no doubt.”

“You are still angry with me,” said Dr. Harding, “for my hard, but well-meant, words a week ago, Cuthbert. But I have a sacred duty to discharge, not only towards yourself, but towards the orphan entrusted to my care by a brave soldier who is no more.”

“Dr. Harding,” said Cuthbert, with a

certain easy emphasis and a most peculiar expression, you distinctly told me on that occasion, that I had not the same right to form an attachment to your ward, or to seek to obtain an interest in her heart, as I might have if my circumstances happened to be different from what they are."

"Well, I did," replied Dr. Harding; "I certainly said that, and say it still."

"If I understand you rightly," continued Cuthbert, "a large fortune in my possession would have quite altered the case?"

"Indubitably," responded the divine. "Is it not plain to your own good sense?"

"Had I a few hundreds of thousands, for example," persisted Cuthbert, "or even much less, that fact would have made all the difference?"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Dr. Harding. "It is self-evident."

"Now," said Cuthbert, "I fully agree with you, uncle. It would have made a

great difference in your conduct. What difference it might have made in Emily's, I know not. But there is a third difference which it would have made, and would yet make, if it ever came about ; I speak of a difference in myself."

"In yourself?" said the doctor ; "in your position, you mean?"

"Yes, and in myself," urged Cuthbert. "Don't you know what the difference will be if I ever become a very rich man?"

"I am not sure that I see your meaning," replied the rector.

"Will you let me explain it to you?" asked Cuthbert, gay in manner, and fierce at heart.

"By all means," said Dr. Harding.

"I should be still the same individual, you know," resumed the young man ; "I should be still Cuthbert Harding, my own identical self, and your nephew. I should have the same qualities and character, unless

they were spoilt, that is ; and the same capabilities, or talents, or intellectual gifts, only they will have been prostituted. The same character, but probably spoilt ; the same gifts, only prostituted. Do you see ? The whole difference would amount to this—moral corruption and intellectual prostitution.”

Dr. Harding seemed to be shocked, for Cuthbert here came to a dead pause.

“ No, there would be the positive fact of the position,” retorted he, alive now to the subtle play of a weapon whose point had been kept so level with his eye, that he had discovered it with difficulty ; “ the position, the position, nephew ! ”

“ Marry your ward to ‘ a position,’ then,” cried Cuthbert, “ and see will it love her, cherish her, and keep its vows, or she hers ! That is a truly Christian marriage ! Let her love ‘ the position,’ as I must love ‘ the position’ ; that is a truly Christian love !

Happiness must be sought therein, both here and hereafter. I will come any time, and listen to you expounding that doctrine. My station was not degraded. It would have warranted the modest ambition of my attachment. But I owe you Eton, uncle—Eton and loftier thoughts. A rustic brewer's son, I have been brought up with opulence and heirship at each elbow. I have been introduced to comparisons, and the comparisons instilled into me the noble discontent which I still, however, combated and would have quelled. You have revived it in full force. I shall combat it no longer. I will better my 'position.'"

"Right, dear nephew," cried the enchanted divine. "Those are the sentiments you must cherish. You must climb to an equality with the youths whom, for that very purpose, I took care you should know, and amid whom you should pass your most ductile and impressionable years."

“Climb! yes, climb!” cried Cuthbert, who was now so out of himself that he checked his walk, stood stock-still upon the road, and turned full upon the divine. “You say, climb. It is the proper word. They are on the level of which you speak without climbing, and without leaving behind them, in order to climb, any suitable modest attachments they may have formed, or may form. I, too, was on a similar level, somewhat lower down. But they move quietly on theirs; I must quit mine, urged by the aspiring passion you wish to see me obey. That passion, rest assured, will swing a heavier weight and a clumsier escalader than I am to the required elevation. But will you stop the movement then? Is that the law of the passions? They are strong, Uncle Marlowe, and they come when summoned, and perform mighty things. Do they go when told? and when the first task is done? Answer me that. You will land

me, you think, a few steps higher than I now stand, among a class who are there seen moving just a little above our present position. But, remember this, they move there in liberty ; I shall reach them in the gripe of a powerful passion, which will have hauled me into the midst of them by the neck. And then, I suppose, I must shake myself free ; compose my ruffled garments ; and, like the rest, walk about at ease, with my hands in my pockets. And what of the thing which brought me ? Will it let go its hold ? Shall I be like the rest, who have thrown away no love of their sincerer days to attain that envied grade ? who have cast themselves into the arms of no strong passion, or rather devil, to transport them to that height ? Shall I be like the rest, I ask you ? Or shall I have no wages to pay to my strenuous carrier ? Shall I be immediately released by the gentle force which bore me upwards ? Or shall I be dashed,

ay, dashed, down again on the further side ? ”

Cuthbert shuddered a moment from head to foot, and then, ere the rector could reply, continued, with vehemence—

“ I’ll tell you exactly how it is, uncle. I give you your choice of the alternatives ; either everything you value in a person is out of the person (the very dross of the earth, for gaining which alone his gifts are worth anything)—or else, when I am rich, you will find me with precisely the qualities and gifts I at this moment possess, the difference of having prostituted them constituting the sole exception. Cuthbert Harding will still be Cuthbert Harding, intellectually ; but there will be this material and this moral change wrought by the direction of his intellectual efforts, that he was once an honourable youth, possessing a modest competency, and the fair prospects of a decent independence, whereas now he has become base, wealthy, and adored.”

“Upon my word,” said Doctor Marlowe, “you quite overwhelm me !”

“No, no,” retorted Cuthbert ; “you are not easily overwhelmed, Uncle Marlowe. You have more practice in words than I have, or ever shall have. It is truth overwhelms you. It is truth and plain simplicity. But do not be alarmed. Hark you ! I will gratify you. I will follow your precepts. I will take to heart the lesson you have given me. That silly language, as you necessarily deem it, that language of romance, I will never use more. You shall never blush again for your nephew as for a poor, ingenuous enthusiast. No ! no ! take care you never grieve for him, as for something else.”

“Come, come, dear nephew, enough of this !” said Doctor Harding with a strange little pit-a-pat about his heart—a palpitation to which that organ had been long unused.

“Yes, and more than enough,” returned

Cuthbert. "I have a bride in London whom I am going to woo, and whom I will as surely win and wed as I have wooed and lost the fair and matchless Emily."

"Then you resign her, you resign Emily?" cried Doctor Harding, overjoyed.

"Not so fast, uncle. I will tell her so, if I do. It will not be yet."

"But if there be a lady in London whom you are going to marry——" remonstrated the scandalized rector.

"Ah! that is a mental marriage," observed Cuthbert, seriously; "I spoke figuratively. It was to a plan of life I alluded."

"Hum!" said the doctor; and "hum!" said the doctor, again.

Then, suddenly, with a view, in part to change the topic to some other more pleasant—in part to solve a problem which was making his curiosity itch, he said—

"I saw you with Sir Walter Mandeville, just now, as I approached. But he departed,

and I sat down to cool myself. What could you and Sir Walter be talking about ? ”

This was precisely what Cuthbert would not have wished the doctor even to guess.

“ About my battle and my wound, to be sure,” replied he, hardily. “ I was telling him how I was waylaid ; indeed he asked me, for he had heard something of it already.”

“ Battle ! wound ! waylaid ! When ? where ? ” cried Dr. Harding.

“ Last night at eleven o’clock, for the when,” replied Cuthbert. “ And as to the where, I am quite at a loss whether I should answer your affectionately solicitous inquiry by saying it was on the Throstledale highway ; or in the left shoulder, along the bladebone.”

“ Bless my heart ! ” cried the doctor, staring at his nephew.

“ Amen ! ” said Cuthbert, “ if it needs a blessing.”

“And pray,” continued the astonished divine, “how came you to be on the Throstledale highway at that extraordinary hour?”

“It is not an extraordinary hour, believe me, uncle,” replied Cuthbert. It is an hour which recurs regularly every night, and has been as punctual in its appointed arrival as any hour for the last five thousand years and odd.”

“What a youngster you are!” said the doctor, coaxingly. “But, in fine, what brought you out so far from home, so late at night?”

“The flickering up of an expiring flame in the socket,” returned Cuthbert. “The last flare of a romantic attachment, ere I blew it out—poof! I was there to complain to the moon, with the moping owl. I ‘was there to write a sonnet to my mistress’s eyebrow.”

“Well, and very likely too,” replied

Doctor Harding. "I consider that you were a moon's minion for some such purpose. Will you dine with me this evening, usual hour, seven?"

Cuthbert started, with a look of surprise and pleasure.

"I am quite alone," continued the doctor; "Emily and her aunt are gone to the sea. The poor girl is not well—ahem! I am quite alone."

Cuthbert excused himself coldly.

"As they were about to separate in opposite directions, the one continuing his walk to the station, the other going towards Throstledale, young Harding turned round, and said—

"You know French, don't you, uncle?"

"Umph! not as well as Greek. Why do you ask?"

"Only a word, the meaning of which I wanted. But it don't matter. Good-bye."

“I cannot say,” muttered the doctor to himself, as he trudged along—“I cannot say that I quite understand that stripling.”

No, Doctor Harding ; not quite.

CHAPTER IV.

“Good sooth ! there is of antique fays a dearth,
For science every bloom of nature mars,
When through each sylvan covert of the earth,
With smoke and clangour dash her iron cars.”
KENT, *Steam and the Green Woods*.

FALCONER'S answer was lying ready for young Harding when he re-entered the station of the electric telegraph. Retiring to a solitary bench in the corner of the little wooden room, he read the dispatch. Rather long, and yet couched in that concise style which the necessity of paying separately and singly for every word naturally teaches to the most diffuse correspondent. It ran in these terms :—

“Lincoln’s Inn.

“*T. Falconer to C. Harding.*

“Man here by chance knows all about brokers. Offered to bring me the money this day, 4 p.m., as a concluded bargain, on my own written undertaking to deliver the described 20 shares by return of post from Warwickshire. So don’t fail, or I’m in for it. He said they were 20, not 5. No such thing as £25 paid up on that line. If £125 paid, that meant £6 5s. deposit, 20 times. He refused to have anything to do with it to-morrow. You anxious. I did it. Premium £20 to-day.

“P. S.—Man come again. Money here for you, £525, including your own money. Be sure to send the shares, or I’m ruined.”

Cuthbert read this message with dilated eye, and, chancing to look up, saw the clerk who had written it out for him, and who had placed it in the envelope, to be ready for his call or message, watching him curi-

ously. This reminded Cuthbert of his dignity. He bent his eyes once more upon the document, and affected to frown. There was reason for the frown of cogitation, at least, if not for that of anger.

“Twenty premium,” thought he, “and this man—this broker’s friend, this convenient person who knows them all, as Falconer laconically says—refused to have anything to do with it to-morrow. What does this mean but the expectation of a further rise?—the eager resolve to close at once? Perhaps, had Falconer waited for the actual receipt of the shares from me, as a less friendly fellow would indubitably have waited, I might have netted a hundred pounds more to-morrow. But who knows? This, at least, suffices as it is, and it is charming. Four hundred on my shares, my own hundred and twenty-five back; five hundred and twenty-five. With Sir Walter’s money, seventeen hundred odd. When my

father's is added—say he is badly off, say he is what he professes to be, scarcely solvent (let him help me now, and only hold on for a brief space, and I will make him solvent enough)—why, it cannot mount up to less than two thousand two hundred, at the least. So much for the fifty pounds I had at Eton, not a month ago. And all led on to what came next by the most natural steps in the world. My betting-book kept alive my attention to everything which concerned horses. Therefore, quite awake to Childering's horse at the inn, while Geoffrey was asleep to the vital importance of that noble brute's most opportune propinquity. Well, on Childering's horse I rode into a better sphere of society, which I will sow and till in my own fashion. Item, rode into Sir Walter's munificent gratitude on the same occasion, and by the self-same neck-or-all-things gallop. That gratitude I have already turned to its utmost account, except a few

letters of introduction, mem. A good three weeks' work, crowned by a capital morning's business."

He rose with quite the contrary idea, and, as he sauntered forth towards the Railway Whistle, he muttered—

"Now I will begin. Morning's business, indeed !"

In the station yard his eye was caught by something about the appearance of a man, mounted on a powerful brown mare, who seemed to be waiting for a train, the approach of which from London was even then audible. This man appeared to be about sixty. He was of low stature, so far as could be judged while he sat in the saddle ; and the legs, though not long absolutely, were long relatively to the height of the trunk. He was very spare and light of person ; the complexion bronzed ; the eye bright and calm, but with something cunning, or, in other words, little in its expres-

sion, despite the unquestionable sagacity which was its general character. What is meant here is, that a good critic in these matters, an enlightened and just observer, would be likely to say—"that would be a very able, only that he is probably an over-reaching, man."

Cunning stifles genius, it need scarce be said ; but even that ruder power, called ability, is killed by trickiness.

The trace of this, although scarcely perceptible, Cuthbert detected, in what he admired otherwise as a firm and able countenance. Still young Harding was interested in the equestrian by another circumstance—by a small circumstance in itself ; but it was a link in the common, not the statute, free-masonry of congenial tastes.

The man, as has been stated, was mounted upon a powerful brown mare, and how he sat on the saddle ! Ah ! it was singular. You would imagine that this man knew nothing

about riding, and you would be right that he cared nothing about the high *manège*, so reckless, clumsy, ungainly, lolling, lazy, unbalanced, seemed his seat. "He cannot ride," you would say. Can he not? There was not a horse within the four seas of Britain which could throw that rider, fully awake as he was now, or half asleep as he sometimes was when thundering late at night, with furious speed, to his newly purchased home, at the Limes.

It was not Cuthbert, but you, reader, if not to the manner born, who were supposed to have said just now, "that man cannot ride."

Cuthbert knew better, or, at least, thought otherwise, as he contemplated the spare, light figure.

Cuthbert had wished to pass on, but a little group was in his way; and, before he had threaded it, his attention had been fixed, for a few moments, in the way which has been mentioned.

The old man had one foot dangling carelessly out of the stirrup ; he wore spectacles ; and, as his “roadster” began to fret and fidget at the first distant rumble of the approaching train, he began, while swayed up and down, hither and thither, like a person seated in a boat on trembling water, to read a letter which he had taken out of his pocket.

When he had satisfied his mind respecting what he sought in that letter, his eyes, as he raised his head, lighted on Cuthbert, who was attentively regarding him.

He repaid the scrutiny with interest ; and Cuthbert, in order to disembarass himself of the consequent awkwardness, would have addressed some casual remark of civility to the horseman, and so passed on, only for an incident which gave him a multitude of companions in his offence (if offence there was) ; in other words, drew the eyes of all present towards the same individual.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT took place at that moment was simple enough, and not tragical. But it was precisely this which made the wonder of the spectators, and indeed, the wonder of the spectacle. If there had been a catastrophe, they would have all stared, of course: they now stared because there was none. "There is something not wholly disagreeable to us," says the amiable French moralist—or liar—"in the misfortunes of our dearest friends." And so there is something which fixes our involuntary interest in the good luck or the address of our worst enemies. The little old man on the mettlesome horse had not many

friends there, or, in truth, elsewhere, yet all eyes were turned towards him, at present, with much interest and with one accord.

It has been said that, just as his steed became fidgety, he had begun to read a letter, having one foot out of, and one foot in, the stirrup, his spectacles on his nose. The letter he held in his right hand; the reins he clutched, with a negligent-looking grasp, in his left. The train approached rapidly; the noise of its rush, of course, grew in proportion, and the steed began to dance.

“Quiet, Peg!” cried the horseman, still reading.

The steed now bolted, in a paroxysm of alarm, and the rider began thoughtfully to fold his letter.

But the man, in his absence of mind, had forgotten, it seems, what coat he wore. It possessed not the requisite pocket, and the letter consequently fell to the ground near Cuthbert. While the latter stooped to pick

it up, the rider was violently borne to a distance.

The little incident was over. The unostentatious horseman seemed to be scarcely conscious of what had fixed everybody's attention else, and certainly much less attentive to the temporary vagaries in which Peggy had indulged, than to the fall of his letter, which young Harding was now bearing towards him.

"Thanks, sir—thanks!" said he, in a slightly off-hand manner, with which Cuthbert was not at all satisfied—"sorry you should take the trouble."

"I conclude I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Brompton, of the—the——"

"At your service, sir," interrupted the other; "and of anything from a stable loft to an auction room, from Newmarket to the estate of the Limes."

"I have been anxious to know you, Mr. Brompton. I have a great respect for men

of genius and courage. You sometimes go to—to——”

Mr. Brompton did not help Cuthbert to the word this time. Greatly struck, and even moved, by the first part of the young man's last sentence, the like of which he had not heard addressed to him for the forty years of his career, he listened with curiosity to what was to follow. But it was not to follow. Cuthbert thought better of it. Nevertheless much was gained.

As to Mr. Brompton, he was a money making man ; but not what the slang of the superficial would have us believe, a money-making machine. There is no such thing. There is no human being, however enslaved by one domineering master passion, who has not his own man's spirit, and man's vanity, and man's weaknesses, hidden away somewhere ; no, not a human being that has not even something which he loves much more than would be supposed by those who be-

hold him habitually governed, in the patent and social transactions of life, by the great predominating motives to which he may have yielded up the serious exertions of his career. There is something simple in the cunning, and something soft in the hard, man, if you could find it out. Circumstances have generally played their own voluntary, their own wild airs upon the instrument; but the silent notes are silent, only because they are not stricken. Touch them, and they will surprise you by their unwonted response. But you don't know where they are; you don't know the stops of the instrument; that is the whole secret.

“To where, sir?” asked Brompton.

Cuthbert looked foolish for once. He had been thinking of Cumberland, and of Christ's Hope estate (which was Emily's), merely because the lady whom he loved had there a property, and this person was its agent.

While he mendaciously stammered out

“to London,” the train had disgorged its passengers, and Mr. Brompton’s eye was fixed on a man who no sooner saw him, than he approached.

“Ding them all ?” cried this individual.
“Do you call that a Government ?”

“Then you have failed to get attention to your invention ?” inquired Mr. Brompton, freezingly.

“They took three months to answer my last letter, and then told me, though I have been three years at them, that I had addressed myself to the wrong quarter. I’m tired of it. Why the quarter they said, had referred me, last year, to the quarter where I was. They are only playing at blind man’s buff with me. Ah ! if I had stuck to my business, I’d have been a rich man by this time.”

“Well, go back to it, Hull,” said Brompton : “it is not too late !”

“No, I’m not a man, but a marble, if I

do. I have two thousand pounds left ; and if you'll stick to me, as you said——”

The man looked up piteously at the hard, cold face. Cuthbert observed everything that passed with lively interest.

“ As I said ! ” interrupted Brompton. “ I said, provided you got the Government to look at it in earnest, I would at once help you to set up a factory for the supply of the articles ; but now you want to throw your heft after the hatchet.”

“ But I'll force 'em ? ” cried Hull. “ I'll shame 'em ! I'll get it before the public ! The press will take it up ! I'll establish a special newspaper. It is no secret now. I've patented all three inventions, and the more who know of them,” added he, looking at Cuthbert, and speaking in a loud tone, and with a certain violence of manner——“ the more who know of them the merrier. See what one gets by thinking to serve the country at large ! ”

“Your two thousand pounds,” said Mr. Brompton, “won’t go far in the way you lay down. If it comes to an affair of agitating, why it is not the right business for it, man. What large and powerful classes will ever interest themselves, I should like to know, in crying out for justice to you, an obscure inventor, or in insisting that one individual shall make his fortune !”

“It is not that !” exclaimed Hull. “Won’t the service of the country——”

“Hang it !” interrupted Brompton. “You have lost your wits. An indirect, ultimate improvement of some sort, in the—Bah ! I have no patience with you. Well, good morning, I must hurry off. Good morning, Mr. Harding. Shall be glad to see you at the Limes, sir, any time. I would have helped you, Hull, only you——”

The last word was lost in the clatter of Peggy’s hoofs, and Mr. Brompton galloped away.

"I dare say," said young Harding, "that you have not gone the right way to work. Do you know anybody?"

"Do I know anybody? What do you mean by that? Why, I know Jack Brompton, for instance," said Hull.

"He is not anybody," replied Cuthbert. "Do you know anybody, I ask you again?"

"What do you mean by anybody? I know lots!" retorted Mr. Hull.

"Most probably," replied Cuthbert, "but that is not the reason why your invention has failed to receive justice—I mean, immediate and careful examination. Mr. Brompton thinks you had better give it up."

"Give it up!" cried the man, "after sacrificing a good situation, and half the savings of many years of hard work! Mr. Brompton be shot! I'll spend my last shilling first."

"I can get your project, if you will show me by what name I am to call it, treated

fairly," said Cuthbert, "at the hands of Government, and that at once."

"Why, I've thrown away three years on 'em! Government, indeed!" interrupted Mr. Hull, furiously.

"I can do it from where I stand in three days," continued Cuthbert.

"Young man!" exclaimed Mr. Hull, "I am in no humour to stand any nonsense, and——"

"Nor I," replied Cuthbert, with his dangerous look. "And, to commence, I beg you not to risk that phrase of 'young man' in that tone again; at least, while you speak to me."

The other opened his mouth.

"One would imagine you thought civility an insult," pursued Cuthbert, "and that you were prepared to regard as an enemy the first person you have met for three years, who is willing to serve you in the very manner you desire; at least, the first person

thus willing who, with the will, has the power also. Friends, I suppose, are too plentiful with you."

"No, I'm blowed if they be! But who the dickens are you?" cried Mr. Hull. "If you can open the Ministerial ears to the voice of public spirit and practical science?"

"If you can spare ten minutes of your valuable time," replied Cuthbert, "come with me to the Railway Whistle yonder, and you 'may hear of something to your advantage,' as the advertisement says."

"It's the scurvy treatment of that fellow Brompton that sticks in me, when I come to reflect on it."

"He is nobody, I tell you," answered Cuthbert. "Come along."

And he proceeded to the inn, followed by Mr. Hull.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I SAY, sir, I forgot to ask you,” cried Mr. Hull, when Cuthbert and he had been installed in a room of the Railway Whistle, “ but you have not told me your name ! ”

Cuthbert had seated himself at a table, and, having selected one from half a dozen sheets of note paper, which, according to his orders on entering, the waiter had brought, was busily occupied in writing. He looked up for a moment.

“ You did not forget, you asked me who the dickens I was. Change that style when you ask me again. Meantime, take a chair,” added he, “ and oblige me by not interrupting me till I have hurried off a letter,

which must catch this next post. I am coming to your business in a moment."

He resumed his writing.

"Dang the chap!" thought Mr. Hull.

"Perhaps *he* is 'Somebody.'"

Several minutes passed, and Cuthbert still wrote. He folded his letter.

Mr. Hull hummed.

"Now, sir, if you please," said he.

"Pray be patient, Mr. Hull," replied Cuthbert, "and ring the bell which is near you."

"Well, I am sure!" interjected Mr. Hull, mentally. But he rang the bell. Cuthbert had taken another sheet of note paper, and was already engaged rapidly with a second letter when the waiter entered.

"A light and some sealing wax," said Cuthbert, without looking up.

The waiter vanished. When he returned with the articles required, Cuthbert was folding his second letter.

“Is that young gentleman whom I noticed as I came in,” inquired he, “still about the premises? He with the fair complexion. Very handsome. Wore a light frock.”

The waiter fixed his eyes on the ceiling for a moment, and then, with a sudden start of intelligence and a smile, replied—

“Oh, I know the gentleman you mean, sir. No, sir; he’s gone, sir. I hear he did something extraordinary as the goods train was going by this morning. Saved a child’s life or something, sir!”

“That is the gentleman,” replied Cuthbert. “Ah! he is gone!”

Cuthbert bit his lip, and seemed disconcerted for a moment, during which the waiter played irresolutely with the handle of the door, for he felt that he had not received the order for which he had been summoned.

But of what was young Harding in want? Of apparently the most trivial and puerile

thing in the world, when you consider that a ravening inventor, who still possessed two thousand pounds, and who meditated the heroic expenditure of his last shilling in furtherance of a darling project, was there by special invitation, impatiently awaiting the youthful money-spinner's pleasure. In presence of a man who had still two thousand pounds, and who evidently valued that sum as but dross, in comparison with the interests of a great invention, such a character as Master Cuthbert Harding must have had weighty reasons indeed to make him desire to confer with *anybody* else first ; what he wanted must, therefore, have been vitally important. No—it was but the meaning of a certain word. He looked at his watch. And that explains the otherwise unaccountable disregard and postponement of which Mr. Robert Hull now began to feel himself, with some indignation, to be the victim. Cuthbert could keep back

Mr. Hull safely enough, but he could not keep back the hour of post. Mr. Hull and the patent could be induced to wait for him, but tide and time tarry for no man. In a few minutes he would be very little disposed to delay further his conversation with that individual, for then it would be too late to attend to what was now engrossing his solicitude : and once it became really too late to attempt anything, a fig for it in Master Cuthbert's estimation. At that age, he lost no time in brooding over that irrevocable past which no brooding can recall. Let the past bury its own dead, was his maxim.

“Dang it !” cried Mr. Hull, “I do want to come to the point, that is the truth ! Do you suppose I'm going to——”

Cuthbert arrested the sentence by a glance. Nay, Mr. Hull not only stopped in the middle of what he was saying, but had the air of one who suddenly becomes

sensible that he has been guilty of some offence.

“You have squandered three years,” said Cuthbert, hissing out the words, “and you begrudge three minutes! And those blundering years have nearly destroyed you, while these wisely spent minutes would have made a man of you again.”

He paused for a moment and then added—

“I entreat a little patience.”

Mr. Hull gathered himself into a screwed attitude, shut his mouth, and nodded his head with violence.

Cuthbert relapsed into as complete a temporary oblivion of him, as if he was not in existence. Cuthbert was looking at the waiter, and musing. Should he hazard his present design? Well, it could not do any harm, even were his conjecture wrong; and, while a miss would be nowise either discreditable or disastrous, the hit, on the other hand, if a hit it proved, would, beyond doubt, be very considerable.

“Confound it!” thought he, “there is something positively and painfully ridiculous in such ignorance. Eton, indeed! As if we had not to deal in business with modern men of many nations. Some very ordinary, well known word, I have no doubt, this ‘*cass*’—‘*cass*’——. I cannot go very far astray, it is true, by acting on my guess. Still it is only a guess, and this word might be important; in any case, it would be a satisfaction to be sure of what really was meant!”

While he was thus, in that sunny noontide and the quiet little room of that railway inn, “stopped by the elements,” like Napoleon in Russia (to borrow from the riot of a brilliant man’s expressions)—while thus cabined and confined by such a puerile difficulty, an exceedingly commonplace incident roused him out of his reflections, or, rather, guided them towards an immediate means of solution.

The sound of a piano through the open

door came jerkily, and not seductively, to his ear. A terrific and spasmodic bit of execution that !

“ Ah ! ” thought Cuthbert, “ this castle encloseth some fair maiden, who smiteth the resounding instrument. That is practice ! ”

A man has not a sister for nothing.

“ Who is it, ” said he to the waiter, “ playing the piano so—ahem !—so nicely ? ”

The waiter grinned, and Mr. Hull started with indignant amazement. Notwithstanding that start, Mr. Hull, however, spoke not a word. He had been, for some time, studying Cuthbert’s appearance, and comparing it with the cavalier manner of such a question as “ Do you know anybody ? ” and of such a threat as “ I will abandon you to your own devices, if you interrupt me again. ”

He was somewhat impressed by the result of this examination—nay, he was even a little under the stroke of awe, or of that

ascendant which the extraordinary lad contrived to exercise at times. And now, although scandalized by finding that the young gentleman was thinking of a piano, instead of attending to the important invention, which was the one thing needful; yet such was the stock of vague respect and expectancy which he had lain in during his scrutiny of Cuthbert, that those feelings predominated even over the disedifying shock of the last inquiry addressed to the waiter. See what an opinion entertained of you, even when merely conjectural, is !

“That’s our master’s young missus, sir,” replied the waiter, with the sly grin which has been chronicled. And, truth to say, the music was detestable. The last waiter had given warning in consequence. Fortunately, Nature had drawn a rather hard and fibrous cuticle over the tympanum of the present functionary’s ear.

“Are you tender in the musical line ?”

had been the first question of the landlord in hiring him.

“No, sir—tough,” was the reply.

“Oh!” said Cuthbert, half to the waiter and half to himself; “accomplishments—French, drawing, use of the globes, and a dexterous display of the ankle—taught at some tiptop boarding school.”

“I have no doubt, if you take my compliments—the compliments of a young gentleman who has just received a letter, in French, from his sister, which he must infallibly answer by this post, that your young mistress with oblige me with a moment’s loan of a French dictionary.”

Mr. Hull again started, and his look (although still remaining discreetly untranslated into words) seemed to say—“Here is a go!”

The waiter disappeared in quite a glitter and halo of grins.

“My young missus’s, Miss Ferdinanda’s,

compliments, sir, and she hasn't got no French diction, not having any occasion. But if she knew the word you want——”

This was a fib ; Cuthbert felt it was ; the music had ceased ; and Cuthbert saw the French dictionary, at that very moment, being transferred from the bookshelf to a chair, where the young lady proceeded to sit on the forty and odd thousand words of the French language—he saw this, I say, as plainly as if he had been in the room.

“There !” cried he, writing hastily a word on a sheet of note paper, and handing it to the waiter ; “take her that—compliments as before—and what does it mean ?”

The waiter was longer absent than the first time. Cuthbert even heard him come out, and close the door, but not descend. A few moments, and the bell rang. Waiter knocks. Door opens.

“Miss Ferdinanda's compliments, sir,” said the waiter, shortly afterwards, handing

to Cuthbert a twisted, snake-like, or, rather froglike, note, only flatter than the animal.

“Hum!” said Cuthbert. “‘*Cassette*, the box which young ladies’—bah! ‘*Cassette*, a casket.’ *Cassette*, used for that case of jewels. You may go.”

The domestic left the room, and Cuthbert rewrote one of his letters, put it in a small envelope, directed it, enclosed it in the other letter, and directed this last to Falconer. Another, not so long in the composition, he addressed to Mr. Melcombe.

“Now, Mr. Hull, for you,” said young Harding, who, however, again rang the bell. When the waiter returned, Cuthbert asked, was there anybody who could at once take a letter to the post-office?

But, as the servant seemed to hesitate, Cuthbert immediately rose, put on his hat, and said, while handing the waiter a small piece of money—

“Come, Mr. Hull! We can arrange that

matter as we go along. My compliments and thanks to the young lady, waiter."

"Yes, sir; who shall I say, sir?"

"Say the young gentleman."

And Cuthbert hastily quitted the inn, Mr. Hull following him.

"Well! I never!" thought this last. "He treats me as if the whole county belonged to him."

"Mr. Hull," said Cuthbert, when they were outside, "my object in postponing, for five minutes, your affair, was merely and solely to be able to give it an undivided mind. It deserves no less," added Cuthbert, as he dropped the larger of his two envelopes into the post-office.

CHAPTER VII.

HE saw, about a hundred miles off, Falconer, very early in the morning, balustraded and entrenched amid folios, writing laboriously on foolscap, and reading carefully off parchment. A yellow fog blockaded two dingy windows on the outside. Inside, the studious rays of a moderator lamp illumined all immediately below them ; shot against the ceiling, straight through the glass chimney, two rings of light, one within the other, and a tawny, round, quivering patch of lustre ; and left the rest of the room in a sort of scrub and jungle of tangled shadows.

An experienced inhabitant of the monster

metropolis, without heeding or noting the clang of its innumerable church clocks, can almost tell the time of day or night. Every hour has its own smell in London ; every hour has, also, its own sounds ; and (although this requires a nicer tact to discern) almost its own looks.

It now smelt five o'clock in the morning, and buzzed it. It was five. Nearly an hour later, to Falconer's surprise (for it had seemed to fly like half a minute), he heard a metallic clang, and then that indescribable screech which no stranger, the first time he hears it, ever comprehends, and which your loving Londoner recognizes as an announcement of the first milk of that day. Not altogether cow's milk, but yet London's milk. A great deal of virtue, without belonging to the thing itself, is associated with its distribution. Among the birds, also, there exists an urban, as well as a rural, population ; a town-haunting class, the fashionable tribes of

the feathered world. What they can gain by such affectation, and, above all, by such airs, I know not. They are a misguided race.

Another and much vaster stretch of time was now traversed unconsciously by the occupied mind of Falconer, when he suddenly cried—

“Bless me ! Already ! Ah ! the day is too short for one’s business ; that is, for one’s work. Alas ! there is a difference !”

He had begun his day pretty early, too. What provoked his exclamation was the first rap of the postman in the neighbourhood. The knock now ran raining along the adjacent street like a patter of musketry, and rattled up and down, in and out of chambers, where these last happened to be furnished with knockers.

Falconer’s had that appendage. Two intervening doors, both of them shut, rendered faint the plodding tread of the letter carrier, and quite inaudible the rustle (other-

wise unmistakable) of some document as it slid through the orifice intended for it, and fell into the receiving box in Falconer's outer room. Immediately afterwards, the rap tap sent its peremptory "advice of the fact" to the young barrister's ear, and the dull tramp receded.

"Ah! from Harding!" said he, as he opened the letter. "That is all right. He sends me the shares, no doubt. Yes, here they are. Quite correct. Hollo! what is this? 'Immediate. To His Imper——'"

And he gazed in surprise at a sealed enclosure. Resuming the perusal of the letter addressed to himself, he soon found what he had to do, although his surprise was not thereby diminished; if anything, it was increased.

"Curious!" muttered he. "But, at least, nothing can be more clearly enjoined. And I'll render this little service to Harding, since service it seems to be, in my own

person. He is a very nice, good, simple-hearted fellow, is Harding. We were always great friends."

And Cuthbert, some hundred miles or so distant, saw Falconer proceed to write a letter; and then he saw Falconer go to a drawer, and unlock it with a bramah key, and select from the sum of five hundred and twenty-five pounds, the sum of two hundred pounds; only Cuthbert could not see in how many notes. But that did not matter; there might be ten twenty pound notes, or twenty ten pound, or any other combination. The sum was correct, and the notes were duly enclosed in the letter which Falconer had just written. Of that, Cuthbert felt quite sure, as from Throstledale, in one second's imagination, he watched his friend's painstaking, simple face, bending over the large table in the prim wood-panelled inner room of the dingy old chambers in Lincoln's Inn.

With Cuthbert, at Throstledale, time stood still during all these changes ; but it ran fast at Lincoln's Inn. It was still the same single second of time with the imagining spectator, when Falconer, now hastening with his breakfast, started, for the second time that morning, at a cry. This second screech of a London morning was the first that Cuthbert had heard in his mind, experience being necessary to know what the milk song was like.

But he had anticipated Falconer's newspaper, duly brought to chambers, but not until about breakfast hour ; so as not to beguile the recluse into too much intellectual dissipation, but, on the contrary, so as to kill two birds with one stone, and allow mind and body to take their recreation together.

" Bless me ! " Falconer once more exclaimed. " I must get this, to come here again at lunch, when I have returned from St. James's. I shall be late otherwise, sure

as a gun ” (a favourite simile of that fertile-minded barrister, in whose hands a gun was not sure)—“ as sure as a gun, I shall be late otherwise with Harding’s commission. Ha ! breach of promise—great speech of —— in that case of Susan’s—poor Susan ! No, it is too severe a temptation. I must not look at it, or I shall never tear myself away in time.”

And Falconer pushed the paper from him. He sighed, however, and muttered—

“ Harding does not know, Harding little guesses, what I sacrifice this morning, in order to see his commission punctually executed ! ”

Mr. Falconer, we beg your pardon, Master Harding guessed it all, knew it all, saw you.

“ That dear, good, simple Falconer,” thought Cuthbert, “ I can see him.”

And it was true ; Cuthbert did see him. They called each other simple, too. Ah ! what a difference !

It now began to be quite another thing in London. Again, the practised denizen, quite irrespectively of all watches and all clocks, could have told you the hour ; yes, blindfold.

As to Falconer, he had taken so kindly to that vast beloved home of his, he cherished that “stony hearted” stepmother so dearly, he was so completely saturated with all the instincts and intuitions of a thorough Londoner, that he always knew the phases of the half hours. He now smelt, and almost saw, ten o’clock, as well as heard it ; and if each, and all, of those three senses had been suddenly deprived of their indications, he would yet have felt the hour, while hurrying through Covent Garden and Leicester Square towards the Haymarket.

Cuthbert, it must be admitted, felt none of these sensations, smelt none of these odours, saw none of these myriad details, fused, as they pass, into one vague, but un-

erring instinct. Yet Cuthbert did, at least, see Falconer rush to the door of a large house, somewhere about the corners of King Street, and give a vehement knock, like a postman's, and drop a letter into the box, and retreat swiftly. At ten yards' distance he became invisible. The fog had swallowed up his figure.

Two persons had just finished breakfast in a large room. A casket lay on the table between them. He with the bald Italian brow, and acute, small features (in which there was a certain sweetness of expression), had his hand upon the casket. The other, with the quiet, the almost phlegmatic, manner, the massive chin, the grand classic facial outline, and the sculpturesque head, was leaning back in his chair, his eyes half closed in thought.

A servant entered with a letter on a silver plate, said nothing, slid the letter upon the table (since he to whom it was directed stirred not), and so withdrew.

When the letter had been perused, the superior of the two who were thus sitting together said, in French—

“ I can avail myself of this. You may put the case away for another time—perhaps for ever. It was well to delay such an expedient to the last moment. By that means we are sure that it is Fate which acts ; otherwise, it had been I myself. And thus there might have been regret afterwards.”

So saying, he extended the letter towards his companion.

The latter began to read parts of the letter aloud. His pronunciation of the English, which he perfectly comprehended, was better than that of his superior, who equally understood it, but still was far from excellent.

“ ‘ Your Imperial Highness need not scruple to use this ; for such advances are only a regular, habitual, and straightforward part of my professed business or

trade. The only thing at all unusual (and this I would waive at your command) is the wish I have expressed, that you would gratify me by not requiring any receipt to pass between us in the matter. I will note the sum down on my side, as lent ; your I. H. on yours, as borrowed ; enjoining on your representatives or assigns to liquidate it when they can, in case of your death. In the present case, I charge not my accustomed interest ; let it run at six per cent. As to my means of guessing that the sum may be desirable (for I do not know this), I have only to repeat that my calling is partly that of a money lender, and we naturally make a point of learning what others can never even suspect, and what remains, for the sake of our own advantage, a secret with ourselves.

“ ‘The time for repayment is when it shall be agreeable to the person who, in this instance, will, I trust, do me the

honour of using the money. I only regret that it is not fifty times the amount ; but, unluckily, I have just locked up all my loose capital for the moment, viz., a sum of eleven thousand pounds, which happened to be recouped by me rather sooner than I expected, and which I (not foreseeing the present case) too hastily remerged on a mortgage at twelve per cent. Your I. H.'s sincere well-wisher and most humble servant,

‘ C. H.’ ”

At the words, “twelve per cent.” the reader paused. He then folded the letter, replacing in it the bank notes for two hundred pounds, and handed the whole back to his superior.

This gentleman once more separated the letter from its enclosures, gave these last to his companion, and, putting Cuthbert's composition in his pocket, said—

“You will pay Mr. Bradworth before twelve o’clock.” After a long pause he added: “My uncle made a mistake about destiny.”

“Surely, you also believe in it?”

“I believe in it after quite another fashion. I, too, confide in my star; or, to employ a far better phrase, I confide in my mission; and it will be accomplished.”

“Then, like him, you have your star?”

“No; my star has me. I have my mission, but I am only its instrument, not its master. I like the term ‘mission’ better; for I have a work to do, and I will do it. My uncle fell by that very mistake. He went to Russia, for example, because he thought his star was at his beck and would obey him.”

“It cheated him once,” said the inferior.

“No; he cheated it. He should have obeyed, just where he thought he would

receive obedience. I will imitate him where his mighty intelligence, his colossal genius, inspired him with the true principles of action. I will resume, continue, and complete, his broken work, without slavishly copying all his means."

"That thought of his high destiny inspired him," said the other.

"The thought of it also inspires me."

"But——" said the other, interrogatively, when the exile had here paused.

"But," continued the first, "my pride is the pride of serving my mission, as his was at first."

"That is a kind of humility," said the other.

"Be it so. But you mistake one thing completely. It is not the success of my uncle which makes my principal strength at the outset."

"What then?" inquired the thin-faced comrade.

“ His success is a great thing, but there is something still greater.”

“ And that ? ” again demanded the other.

“ Is his fall ! ” pursued the superior spirit.

“ His fall ! ” exclaimed the physician.

“ Yes, indubitably,” resumed the exile.

“ What he overthrew and what he built up in France, was overthrown and built up by the will of the French nation ; and that is a great source of strength, even when spontaneous, calm, unprovoked, even when not raging with the wounds of insulted pride. But what was afterwards re-established in France, was re-established, not only in contempt of this national will, but by the force of foreign will. The nature of the success obtained by the used-up dynasties was itself fatal to them. Such a success was incurably fatal. From the moment when those dynasties came back, by the virtue and grace of three million foreign bayonets, from that moment they were

doomed. It became, thenceforward, a mere question of time. All that was required was, for the country to realize that one simple fact; for that fact to spread itself, infuse itself, take solution, as a chemist would say, in the public mind, and saturate the people thoroughly. In saying, 'now it has operated,' 'now, it is fully realized,' or 'now' or 'now,' we might be mistaken; but about the eventual effect, mistaken no thinking man could be. The nation had raised Napoleon; that is a vital point; but it is more vital still, that foreigners raised his successors. His splendid reign is in my favour; his fall is more so. Only for his fall, I should have had on my side merely the national will, calmly proclaiming itself. By means of his fall, I have that national will vehemently vindicating itself from foreign dictation. This must infallibly, sooner or later, carry me to power; but what will keep me there must be something else."

“And that—what is it?” said the physician.

“My own conduct; my own deeds; the gratitude of a nation restored to its proper rank; the respect of a world. Such is my mission: the thought of it inspires me with——”

He paused. His companion suggested, in a low tone:

“With pride.”

“No. I think, as you just now said, that it is rather with humility,” pursued the other; “with humility, with patience, and with courage.”

A silence ensued, which was broken by the inferior.

“Shall I write this lender’s name in the list of those who have served you in the days of our adversity?”

“It is impossible. He has signed no name. ‘C. H.’ only. But write those initials, at least.”

“What shall I mark of him?”

The Prince hesitated. After a few minutes, he said—

“I do not believe what he says about that sum of eleven thousand pounds, locked up inopportunately.”

“How not believe?” asked the physician. “Whether that he would not lend it? or that he does not possess it?”

“I hardly know, but there is something false about the letter.”

“Still, the service is real and true,” remarked the attendant.

“Yes, and I will serve him in return, so far as that may safely be.”

“Perhaps,” said the subordinate, “he is some enthusiastic adherent, not wishing to sign his name, merely because he is English.”

“No,” replied the other. “Enthusiasm trusts, and does more than trust. He would have given his name in full; or, were there

really some imperious motive of a noble kind for withholding it, he would not have given even his initials. Those initials mean a claim on my gratitude hereafter."

"But the abatement of the interest, at least," urged the subordinate, "looks very generous."

"Not to me," replied the exile. "But I will tell you what it does look, and what it is ; it looks, and is, the mark by which a lie is detected on the very face of this letter. If the abatement of the interest was adopted without any selfish view, he who adopted it would not have pointed to it. Unselfishness does not say, 'look at me.' Here is a correspondent (giving initials to which he will some day refer), and saying, see how little I think of myself. His wish that I should notice his generosity shows that he has an object in being generous. Real generosity would efface itself. But he is an able, far seeing, and adroit man ; and, if he be upright as

well, he is worth serving. Moreover, I am obliged to him."

"That sums it up," said the physician, who hastily made a note in a pretty large, but rather thin and flat, book with clasps, which he took from the breast pocket of his frock coat, and returned thither when the ink was dry.

Cuthbert, all this time, had lived but a moment; it was only while his large envelope was dropping into the receiving box of the Throstledale post-office that he endeavoured to trace, in imagination, the fate of the respective documents which it contained.

The reader is now minutely apprised of that fate as it really was. The flash of Cuthbert's conjecture was tolerably true, so far as his friend Falconer is concerned. Of the other person to whom he had written, he said to himself—

"How he will be puzzled!" (The reader sees whether this was the case.) "Well, it

is no harm to make friends who may yet prove powerful. I am kind to the fairy in the ugly withered guise of the false hag as which she has to spend her days of trouble ; when she becomes the radiant queen again, she will, perhaps, do me some good turn, in repayment. I will let the gentleman know who his friend 'C. H.' is, one day. Meantime, it is but two hundred ; and, even if he never comes to anything, he can introduce me to some wealthy spendthrift, who will be glad to take refuge in the arms of my twelve, or fifteen, or twenty, per cent. as I may see best, out of the grip of eighty for the hundred. He'll think me some capitalist ! —what fun ! So generous, too !”

“ Well, sir,” cried Mr. Hull, “ is this a lark with me, or is it not ? Are you ready to do what you said ? ”

Cuthbert started from his reverie.

“ It is done already,” said he. “ You see this letter, directed to my friend, Mr.

Melcombe, the minister you could not get at, as you express it, for three years ?”

And Cuthbert held towards his companion the third note which he had written at the Railway Whistle.

“ I see it,” replied Mr. Hull.

The young money-spinner looked at him thoughtfully, and said—

“ If, within eight days, I do for you what you want, what will you give me ?”

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH the conversation between Cuthbert and this honest inventor (the conclusion of which we will mention in a moment), Cuthbert's youth, as such, may be said to have terminated. At all events, a sufficient idea of it will have been given. Which being so, in order to observe the limits I have prescribed to myself, we shall presently have to mount, as it were, on a very fleet-footed narrative, and (almost at Cuthbert's own pace, on a remarkable occasion) to hurry along the path of his destiny. On the one hand, as the enormous resources which Cuthbert soon commanded, or seemed to

command, were not altogether blown into his hands like a windfall from a tree on a gusty day, it is right to show something of this fact ; for it is really a fact connected with the very nature of the man. On the other hand, it is not with the hundred methods of money-spinning in general, nor even with those adopted by one noted money-spinner, as methods, but with the man himself, his designs, his passions, and whither they brought him, that we are here concerned ; for this is a narrative, in which there figures, indeed, a person noted and eminent in a certain kind of business or craft ; but it is not an exposition or explanation of that craft.

Whoever has watched a carrier pigeon launched upon an errand, can remember how reluctant he felt to remove his eyes while the aerial messenger traced in the heavens that spiral staircase with which he always begins the exercise of his confidential free-

dom. Once these gyrations over, there would be comparatively little attraction in pursuing the straight flight.

The nature of the difficulties which beset Cuthbert Harding's first great passion gave all his passions a new direction; the lean kine of his mind devoured the fat. That first passion itself was swallowed up by one much fiercer; and something else was likewise gradually swallowed up—I mean his respect for himself, a feeling quite different from pride, and, in truth, the opposite of pride, a feeling like that of a conscientious trustee; for a man does not make himself, but his money a man may be said to make; and let him beware of the hour when he begins to worship the work of his own hands.

Only for this, it would be hardly worth while to show how the interview terminated between him and Mr. Hull. But it is soon dispatched.

It was with a boastful and, under the circumstances, a cunningly managed allusion, that Cuthbert had referred to the meaning of "gentleman" as a word, and to the character of "gentleman" as a thing.

But, certainly, the abrupt inquiry in which he, all at once, landed the conversation, was not a gentleman's. In short, the interrogatory with which the last chapter ended was, in common parlance, anything but delicate. Dr. Marlowe Harding would have involuntarily honoured and respected, admired, and venerated it as something "deucedly" and eminently *indelicate*. Yet, though a laudably indelicate interrogatory, it was, at the same time, in another sense, a delicate question.

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Hull, pretty much in the tone in which Mr. Melcombe himself had uttered, on a former occasion, that expressive sibilation, so indicative of a new light bursting on the mind.

“ Well,” demanded Cuthbert, very calmly, although he coloured a little ; “ what am I to understand by ‘ whew ? ’ ”

“ Is that the way the land lies ? ” said Mr. Hull, grinning.

“ That is the way,” said Cuthbert, seriously. “ The straightest way is the shortest way, in business.”

“ Give you ! ” resumed Mr. Hull, thoughtfully ; “ and to think you had almost made me afraid of you ! I stood in awe, as ’twere. Give you ! ” and he stared, grinning from ear to ear.

Cuthbert met this hilarity with composure and seriousness, returning the inventor’s look of mingled astonishment and mirth with one of those under regards of his which were so brooding.

“ Why ! ” cried the delighted and diverted Mr. Hull, “ only think ! I took you for quite another guess person. I thought you was a—— ”

And he stopped with his mouth open. Cuthbert had gradually raised his head ; and now this busy, industrious, simple creature, this good linnet of the hedge, was under the full gaze of that rare serpent of the savannah.

“ You thought I was a what ?—for we are losing time.”

Mr. Hull replied not.

“ Well, you need not finish the sentence,” resumed Cuthbert ; “ I know the word you would have added. It was ‘ gentleman.’ The murder is out—eh ? ”

“ No offence,” interposed Mr. Hull, hastily. “ I did not mean that I regretted you wasn’t. It is better as it is,” continued he, with cheerful kindness. “ All these things are for the best, and come rightest the way they do come. I’m sure, if I didn’t think so,” he added gravely, “ I should have had my heart broke long ago.”

Cuthbert bit his lip. The other noticed

his annoyance, and misinterpreted the cause of it ludicrously.

“Cheer up, my hearty!” said he. “If you can do my job for me, I shan’t give you worse terms because you don’t happen to be exactly what I took you for. Indeed, I’d rather you wasn’t.”

Cuthbert still mused gloomily. Truth to tell, his reflections at that moment were not those of the self-applauding schemer, but were weak—is that the word?—and even, for a second, faltering and romantic.

“What would Emily think?—what would she think of this?—of Cuthbert? Dare I let even little Henrietta Mandeville know me as I am beginning to be? Dare I let my own father know?—or Geoffrey?—or even little Winny?”

Such was the fleeting idea which vexed his serenity.

“Come, don’t stand staring at the ground, as if you would bore two holes with your

eyes right through to the antipodes!" cried Mr. Hull. "What if you do look, or did look, like one of those who would have supported a scientific improvement for improvement's sake, or from a motive of interest in the service and general good of the country? I suppose you must get your bread, like other folks. It is not any disgrace, after all, to be mistaken, at the first blush, for—for—something better than what you——"

"You spoke of three inventions, or improvements," interrupted Cuthbert, without adverting to these consolations. "Do you want——"

"I want them to be examined," interrupted Hull, in his turn, "and pronounced upon by competent men, at once, and no more palavering, no more shuffling, about right quarters and wrong quarters, proper departments and improper departments. All the departments have been as improper as

possible in their behaviour to me hitherto ; as improper—just one as another.”

“What is the nature of each invention ?” inquired Cuthbert.

“The first is a letter sorter, for large post-offices. The second is not likely to do any good except in India, and it is a military thing. When I say India, I mean any hot country where water is just more scarce in proportion as it is more wanted. The third is an improvement in guns.”

“And all you want is, to have these suggestions fairly and seriously examined by Government, through means of practical judges ?” asked Cuthbert.

“No,” said Hull ; “that is not quite all. One of the inventions requires an expensive experiment. I want the Government to pay the expense of that experiment, in case, and only in case, it prove successful.”

Cuthbert wondered within himself why the man had not long since addressed him-

self to some public spirited member of the House of Commons, and thus sought to compel attention to his ideas. But Mr. Hull had done this, and he was the seventieth person whom that member had listened to, urging what appeared to be equally plausible inventions, during a parliamentary career of about nine years. The member's original enthusiasm was frozen up. He had undertaken several such briefs. Unfortunately, one or two of them had got him laughed at, and not one of them had operated any revolution either in science or in its applications. Such suggestions, he had been told, were literally carted ; they were piled in several vans, drawn by two horses, every week day ; while the mere paper containing the explanation of them weighed heavier, at the end of the year, than the largest of the Egyptian pyramids. Competent persons, he was assured, were incessantly engaged in responding to similar anxieties, and investigating

similar pretensions. His particular client's would have their due turn. To give them priority would be to refuse that priority to what was actually under scrutiny now. Before this examination, was he sure they were not the usual rubbish? Was he sure they were an exceptional treasure?

Stuff and nonsense! (only he said this in parliamentary style.) He would not be put off by the slang of office, the traditional platitudes of routine. He would have justice, the whole justice, and nothing but justice—full, immediate, instantaneous justice. Well, he so stormed, that, to pacify or quiet him, ministers gave him plenty of hope, and ordered the most solemn inquiry to be forthwith instituted into the wonderful discoveries of which he was but the humble, albeit zealous, exponent. The world stood still until one bright, particular Douster-swivel had his theories put to the test; for self deluding “inventors” are to real inven-

tors as ninety-nine to one. All the other inventors of that special epoch were denied every semblance of a hearing. They were extremely indignant ; yet the grand eureka, meanwhile, fulfilled not the noble expectations of the disinterested upholder of unappreciated genius and of science aggrieved.

It was not, however, Cuthbert's business to say that he fancied others could help Mr. Hull. He preferred, at present, to help Mr. Hull himself. And Mr. Hull having offered to give him a share in the patent in answer to his indelicate inquiry, young Harding peremptorily declined that advantage, and intimated a weakness for some round sum of money instead. This was agreed to, and, in the course of about a week, Mr. Hull having got a formal and official pledge for the inquiry which his unaided exertions had wasted three years in vainly seeking, the money was faithfully paid to Master Cuthbert. How the inquiry itself terminated,

Cuthbert never cared to inform himself. His business in the business ended just where the business of poor Mr. Hull began. Cuthbert, in spite of his first refusal, did dine with Dr. Harding that evening.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. WILLIAM HARDING “sported” a letter bag, and early one morning, as the postboy came whistling along the green lane between the plantations, he was met by the younger Mr. Harding. Touching his cap, the lad was passing on, when Cuthbert said—

“Nothing for me, I suppose?”

“Nothing for you, sir,” replied the lad, who was called Dick.

“Any cross post letters? There ought to be a letter addressed to my father from—from the county.”

“There ain’t no county letter, sir.”

“Indeed! You seem sharp. Did you

notice the letters, then, when the postmaster put them into the bag ? ”

“ No, sir ; not to say when he put them into the bag to-day ; for he didn’t do it.”

“ How do you know there is not a county letter ? ”

“ Because there ain’t no letter at all, not to-day, sir.”

Cuthbert took the bag, of which his father always took the key, shook it, and felt it. Evidently it was empty. His clasp knife was not put in requisition.

He told the boy to carry the bag to the cottage, and then to ask Mrs. Harding to put up a cold dinner in a basket ; which done, he was to bring the basket and a couple of fishing rods ; he would find him (Master Cuthbert) on the other road, going towards the trout stream.

Dick was much pleased with his commission, and he soon rejoined Cuthbert, who selected a point of the stream from which

the road could be watched for a considerable distance.

About two hours might have thus passed, when Cuthbert rose. Dick started to his feet.

"Wait here," said Cuthbert, "till I call to you from the road. I may then, probably, give you something to take to the cottage, but whatever I give you, or whatever I tell you, you have merely to run away till you come to the swing gate of the plantation, and to wait for me there. There, mind. On no account, move an inch further; and, above all, don't go to the cottage, don't go home, till I come to you again at the swing gate."

So saying, he left the boy, who wondered for a moment, but presently comforted himself by peeping into the basket, and then by whipping the stream with his rod in a manner which would have made Izaak Walton faint.

Meanwhile, a real horse was approaching at a smart trot along the road. On seeing Cuthbert, who had sprung into the highway, the rider pulled up, and the horse shied. A country groom, however, is not easily thrown. The man seemed to know Cuthbert, and, touching his hat, hesitated a moment, but was then passing onward with that slow pace which respect enjoins, when a ray of intelligence appeared suddenly to enlighten young Harding's visage. He stopped, and the rider did the same, saluting again.

"I think I remember your face," said Cuthbert, "even if I did not know your livery. Sir Walter and the rest are well, I hope, at the Park?"

"Quite well, sir, I thank you," said the groom.

"Going to the railway, I suppose?" said Cuthbert.

"No, sir; I am going to Mr. Harding's,

your father's, sir, at Lea Meadows, with Sir Walter's compliments and a note."

"Oh, true?" replied Cuthbert; "my father told me he expected to hear from Sir Walter. You can give me the note; I'll deliver it to my father. How is Mr. Geoffrey?"

The man took out the letter, but looked with shyness at it as he held it doubtfully.

"Mr. Geoffrey, sir? He's not at the Park, sir. I hope you will pardon it, sir, but Sir Walter said, sir, that I was to give this to Mr. Harding, senior."

"He's at Oxford, I know," interrupted Cuthbert. "Left the Duke of Man's yesterday. Ah! a note for my father; he is at home. A hot day for your ride—here's a crown for thirst. Thirst should be crowned—ha, ha! You had better get down, and I'll mount while you run round to the cottage with the letter. You'll find me hereabouts on your return."

As the groom, still holding the note, dismounted, Cuthbert extended the money towards him. The man took it with an obeisance and grin of gratitude, and Cuthbert added—

“Now, you just run on with that letter to the cottage ; you say it is addressed——”

And in a careless manner, in order merely to glance at the address, he took the note, for a moment, out of the groom’s hand.

For a moment ! How was that groom to get that letter again ?

“Egad !” said Cuthbert ; “this is a very nice horse ; I doubt if I ought to venture on him ; I have hurt my shoulder. Perhaps you might take him to the cottage after all.”

“Take this letter,” said Cuthbert, “to my father. Any answer ?” added he, turning to the groom.

“I was not told to wait for an answer, sir,” replied that functionary ; “leastways, I was told not to wait for one.”

“ Well,” said Cuthbert to Dick, “ away with you, then, and remember what you have to do.”

And the lad ran off with the letter.

“ My father is at home,” again remarked Cuthbert, who continued his stroll for awhile along the road which was the servant’s way back ; by-and-by he made the man mount and trot whence he came, by telling him that now he could do so, and that he himself would return and ask his father what news from Sir Walter.

The part which Dick played in this little transaction may seem a device of over caution ; but it was not entirely superfluous. The proof is, that Sir Walter said to the groom that evening—

“ You have been to Lea Meadows, and have delivered the letter ? Whom did you see ? ”

“ I saw their regular postboy, Sir Walter ”
(the remembrance of the crown which his

thirst had received made the man, as Cuthbert knew it would, a little shy), “and I saw young Mr. Harding.”

“Did you give the letter to young Mr. Harding?”

“No, Sir Walter; the postboy ran in with it to the cottage, while young Mr. Harding walked a bit this way, and asked me how they all was at the Park.”

“Oh! walked this way? But old Mr. Harding——”

“Was at home, Sir Walter, in the cottage; and the postboy, who happened to be there, took in the letter.”

“Quite right. And how is young Mr. Harding?”

“He was all well, Sir Walter, except his shoulder, he said. He said, when he had come about half a mile, that he must go back, and ask his father what news from Sir Walter? says he.”

Sir Walter received a due acknowledgment

of the letter from Mr. William Harding. Mr. William Harding knew nothing at all about the letter.

Little Henrietta, at breakfast, catching the words, "From Mr. Harding, of Lea Meadows," which her father muttered, as he broke the seal (she had had her own breakfast), started. But seeing her father absorbed in the perusal of the letter, she sidled up to her mother, who was watching anxiously the hectic of her beautiful little cheeks, and said in a whisper—

"Wait till papa has done."

Her mother smiled caressingly upon the childish mystery, not long, she knew, to be such, whatever it was; and in a moment Sir Walter had folded up the letter absently.

"Papa," said Henrietta, then, "is that Mr. Cuthbert?"

"Is what Mr. Cuthbert?"

"That letter."

"No," said he, "this letter is not Mr.

Cuthbert; but it is from Mr. Cuthbert's father. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know, papa; but I have had such a strange dream. I think, perhaps, it was from Rosalie, telling me something when she was dressing my hair last night. She said that Mr. Cuthbert, who saved mamma's life, nearly lost his own about two nights ago."

"Is he a very high favourite of yours? I thought Algy was the chief favourite," said the father, smiling.

"Oh! yes, Algy is a——. But there was something so sad and earnest in Mr. Cuthbert when he looked. And Algy has never been nearly killed. And Algy will be a great person, will he not? Everybody must like Algy. But Mr. Cuthbert——"

"What was the dream?" asked the mother.

"I thought I was in the garden, and I was plucking some flowers, and I told Mr.

Cuthbert to gather some too. And he was going to do so, when I saw a hand put on his left shoulder ; I could not see anything but the hand, and it was a very dark hand. I wondered where the arm was. And he stood up all at once, and turned half round on that side as if he was listening, and then spoke as if vexed—but not to me.”

“To whom ?” asked the mother.

“I don’t know : the person who had the hand, I suppose, or in answer to something the person said. It was so stupid in me not to ask him. I wish I could dream it again, and I would ask him at once what it was he was listening to. And then he would not stay to gather the bouquet, for he said that he must be busy in life ; and he went off—and that’s all. But, oh mamma ! he said those words ‘busy in life,’ so sadly ; oh, so sadly ! I cannot get them out of my head. They keep ring, ring, ringing.”

“Why, my love,” said Lady Mandeville,

“you heard those words, not in a dream, but in reality ; for, the day he was here, you told me Mr. Cuthbert Harding had used that very expression. You forget, dearest.”

“Did I ? Did he ? Well, I dreamt it again last night. What does he mean by being busy in life, in that sad way ? I wish he would not be busy in life. I wonder how is he busy in life ?”

“We shall know some day soon, no doubt,” said Lady Mandeville.

“Perhaps we shall, mamma.”

Yes, they would know some day soon.

After a little pause, Sir Walter remarked to his wife—

“I shall be curious to watch that young man’s reappearance on the surface. He has taken the plunge which so many take—has gone to London ; has dived for some pearl. By-the-by, you know that beautiful girl, Miss Whitsund—Dr. Marlowe Harding’s ward. She is engaged to him. That ac-

counts for the numerous refusals. The doctor—Cuthbert's uncle—was, I understand, bitterly against the match ; but he has come to a compromise. The young man, if within three years, he can offer certain pecuniary terms, may marry the girl, who will then be twenty ; if he fail to meet his uncle's wishes in respect to money, the youth has promised to release the lady altogether from her engagement. Meanwhile, however, this entanglement has sufficed to break off, unconditionally and definitively, another alliance, on which my old friend, Mr. Childering, from whom I have it all, had set his heart."

"With his son, Algernon, I suppose," said Lady Mandeville, "who is going to stand for the county."

"Yes, only he is not going to stand," replied Sir Walter ; "that is all given up."

"What, papa !" cried little Henrietta, whose presence had been forgotten during

this conversation. "Algy loving a lady that poor Mr. Cuthbert is going to marry! I could not think it of Algy. Why should he take away poor Mr. Cuthbert's marry, and poor Mr. Cuthbert so sad?"

"Then he has no money; or why would papa say that he has three years given him to satisfy his uncle in money? Now I know why Mr. Cuthbert was so sad, and why he must be busy in life, busy."

CHAPTER X.

YOUNG Harding, when ready to proceed "for good," as it is said, to London, went, the day before, to Childering Hall, ostensibly in order to thank Algernon for the great service he had received from that youth, and, by thanking, to learn was it he whom he really had to thank. But Cuthbert was prompted, also, by another motive in his visit.

He was shown into a waiting room, in which heaps of packages lay about with "A. C." on them. After a few minutes' delay, the door opened, and the two young rivals confronted each other.

Cuthbert adverted, with an apology, to the

letter which he had sent, and which, he admitted, was justly termed so “foolish” by his correspondent. Algernon interrupted him.

“Do not allude to it,” said he; “it is forgotten, I assure you. But you must excuse me. I am extremely busy now with—with my father, and I am just starting for town.”

“So am I,” replied Cuthbert; “that is, to-morrow. But there was another subject——”

Algernon coloured.

“Not now,” said he, “I pray you. You may be content, surely, with your advantage.”

“My advantage!” exclaimed Cuthbert. “I do not understand. Your advantage has been so great that, I think, it would allow a little generosity——”

“Oh! you are alluding again to that affair the other night. You would have done just

the same in my place. And, since you have been so successful——”

“I came here,” cried Cuthbert, “in courtesy and in good feeling, but not to submit myself to scoffs.”

Algernon gazed at him in amazement, and at the same time, hastened to say—

“You are, I see, under some extraordinary delusion ; but I have not one instant to spare. Since you, too, are going to London, could you not call on me there ? I shall be at Long’s.”

As he spoke, he moved towards the door offering his hand to Cuthbert. The latter followed, taking the hand after a second’s hesitation, and saying—

“Will you explain ?”

“Yes, yes,” replied Algernon. “I have nothing which I care to conceal from you in the matter.”

“You allude to—to——” said Cuthbert.

“Yes, to that,” returned Algernon.

“Not to the adventure the other night, not to my accident?”

“No, of course not. I wish you what joy a defeated man may.”

And so they parted. Cuthbert, in great astonishment; Algernon, thoughtful, but not at all disposed to indulge the little weakness of pretending to a rival, for a short while, to be more successful than he was. Such “a triumph” he would not have regarded as a triumph at all; nor, if it could have pleased him, would he have bought that pleasure by inflicting a cruelty which could, to say the least of it, have done himself no good. But more than this; he was so absurdly primitive as to fancy that he owed to Cuthbert, even in the interest of the lady who had refused him, any explanation which a misapprehension on Cuthbert’s part of how she had behaved, might seem to need.

When Cuthbert had said to Miss Whitsund, in Dr. Harding’s presence—“You

want a sacrifice on my part, in order that you may be happy : I, a sacrifice on yours, in order that I may not be wretched," etc., in what light would he have regarded her happiness so procured ? With rage. The very thought of it made him nearly mad.

One of the first places to which he made his way in town was Long's. Algernon had left a note for him, saying that he was unexpectedly obliged to pass on through town, but begging him to give his own address to the porter, and promising as early a call as was possible. Although burning with impatience to have the promised explanation with Algernon, Cuthbert could not otherwise hasten the hour of it ; and, accordingly, he did as he was requested.

He then endeavoured to put the subject out of his mind by plunging into a multitude of projects, which had, at least, the merit of affording him a pleasing excitement. That excitement was of a nature to grow by

what it fed on, and it was destined soon to reach a rather momentous pitch.

Meanwhile, Emily Whitsund had sought, on her side, to put out of her head another subject, and by other means. She tried to think of Cuthbert in proportion as he tried not to think of her (except when he would do so for hours in a peculiar manner). They were not successful in the same way, nor in the same degree. She dwelt on his merits ; she even brought herself so far as to consider that he might have had something, poor fellow, to complain of. He would have agreed with her there. The very sternness of Dr. Harding pleaded for him, secretly, with such a character. She had, by a violent effort over her mind, and by disregarding herself as much as was absolutely allowable, endeavoured to look at the whole of her relations with him from his position. That was precisely what he did himself. She reasoned with herself ; she took up his

cause ; she would not be wanting, if a certain fate seemed to have somehow shaken itself down before her in the guise of a duty. He had written to her. The letter, it is true, was not quite in tune with her feelings. Passion enough, indeed, and to spare, there was. But what meant all that almost fierce insistence on the means which his wife should one day find herself enjoying ? She did not want all these things. “ This is love, Cuthbert ; or, if love holds the pen, pride dictates the thoughts ; it was not all this that ever charmed me.”

Then he wrote again, and said it was for her sake. She sighed, but she thought very kindly indeed of her old playmate. And, under the circumstances, she would not have been quite happy with Algernon ; she was sure that the remembrance would intrude itself, that this happiness had cost a great deal of wretchedness elsewhere. Meanwhile Cuthbert had yet to learn what

she had sacrificed, how she had really acted, while his love was so intensified for the moment by another feeling—that of jealousy.

One day, having a great deal on his hands, and having already made acquaintance with London in many a strange nook, by many a devious expedition, it happened that he met his uncle, Dr. Harding. The doctor shook hands with him, and then went on his way. Cuthbert loitered.

“Is young Mr. Childering returned?” asked Cuthbert.

“No, sir; but there are heaps of letters for him. We expect him every day. Any hour, I may say.”

“Has any one called for him to-day?”

“Yes, sir; just this moment. Here is a card a gentleman left only an instant since.”

And the man showed Cuthbert his uncle's card.

Young Harding tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, wrote the day of the month, with the words, "third call," underneath, then his name, and, giving the man this and his card, with half a crown, in order to make sure of his not forgetting, sauntered forth.

He had not gone twenty yards when he met Mr. George Childering, whom he knew through Lord Havisfling (with whom again he had scraped, on pretext of thanking him for the service rendered the night he was attacked, an acquaintance, not destined "to end there," as the saying is)—he met, I say, Mr. George Childering, whom he would have preferred to avoid. But Mr. George would not be avoided.

"You are the very fellow I wanted, Harding," observed that gentleman; "are you going to your den in St. James's?"

"No," said Cuthbert, hesitatingly, thinking, "you are not the fellow I want."

“ Well, when can I find you there? I want you to do me a service. You will be at home this evening?”

“ Why, yes; I shall be at home. But I doubt I shall not be able to do the service you speak of.”

“ Well, how can you tell that? You will let me explain it, I suppose?”

“ I think you have explained already; but as you please. When shall I expect you?”

“ I have to dine with some of ours, and you know I’m a bit of a blood,” returned the refined individual; “ but I’ll slip away. You may expect me between nine and ten.”

“ Good,” replied Harding, already lost in his own thoughts, and, moving off with a wave of the hand which nobody would have supposed to belong to “ a cub ” fresh from the society of the Geoffreys, but which would very well suit him as a man some ten years older, if he ever became such.

He was so absorbed, indeed, that, as he was, a little while afterwards (having safely passed Piccadilly) crossing the much less crowded and less dangerous street in which he had his office (office he called it, and office it was), he did not perceive a railway carrier's heavy van, which happened, at that moment, to be rushing by with the reckless speed particularly characteristic of those vehicles. We may mention that Cuthbert was knocked down by the shaft, but with such force, and so much aside, as to be sent out of reach of the wheels, which would otherwise have terminated his career in a painful manner. Picking himself up, comparatively unhurt, he limped to the steps before his door, which was open. The porter was standing in the doorway, and a messenger was leaving.

"Well, you have had an escape, sir!" said the porter.

Cuthbert looked round suddenly, in a peculiar manner, but said nothing.

The man followed Cuthbert into his room (which was on the ground floor), holding a note ; and again repeated the exclamation, varying it a little, thus—

“ Well, that was a mercy, I am sure ! ”

Young Harding had approached the window and was looking out when the man said this ; and, indeed, the man spoke feelingly, and was out of breath with sympathetic fright.

Cuthbert made no reply to the remark, but, sighing heavily, asked, was there anything for him.

“ Only this bit of a note, sir, that a lad left just as you was coming up the door.”

It was from Algernon, hastily scrawled in pencil, announcing that he would call at nine o'clock in the evening ; he had but that instant come to town, he said.

“ This is horribly awkward,” thought Cuthbert. “ Those two will meet ! Well, that is their affair.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE street, like others in St. James's, was shady—for the houses were tall—but noisy, because it was paved with barricade stones.

The room was a large, plain, scantily furnished, dingy old office, with a deep wainscot and surbase of deal all round it.

Cuthbert seated himself in the leathern chair before the massive table-desk, and was at once deep in thought.

A knock and a ring at length startled him. He pushed his chair back, thrust into the "pigeon holes" of the perpendicular screen, which rose like a parapet in his front, sundry papers less innocuous than "pigeons" in the sharpness of beak and

claw, left his table, and saying, "Come in," began himself to light the gas.

While doing this, he looked aside at his visitor, and, instead of the person whom he had expected, beheld the face of his friend, Tom Falconer. Tom was short-sighted, and wore spectacles.

When, having shaken hands, they were seated, Falconer said—

"Harding, although I have something curious to mention, yet I have come to talk to you—after this—on a subject that will surprise you. But one needs a confidant in life, doesn't one?"

"One does," replied Cuthbert, smiling; "or, as they say in the rural parts from which I come, 'some do, and other some don't.'"

"Ah!" rejoined Falconer, "I am aware that you are *other* some; but we were always great friends, you know—weren't we? I wonder, at times, with your natu-

rally simple, straightforward disposition—country-bred, too—that you have never been bitten yourself in the same way. That clear business head is a curious combination with such a heart as yours. Noble act that, some time ago, helping a gallant exile, and not letting yourself be known. Harding, it was noble—romantic, *I* call it. And yet you understand nothing at all about the subject I come to mention—a mere child, I'll be bound. Harding," added Tom, solemnly, "the tender passion is not, and never was, in your line. You never were in love—you don't know what it is ; you're all for those Smithfield drinking houses, and that sort of thing—'the drovers' house of call,' and——"

"Excuse me, Falconer," interrupted Harding ; " we can come to the love in a minute. Have there been any more nibblings about those two places, since I referred intending purchasers to you ? "

“Frequent bites, even,” answered Falconer ; “but I have no authority from you to conclude anything under——”

“Quite right,” returned Harding : “not yet—not yet. Now for the love !”

“No,” replied Falconer ; “a word first : you have put a subject into my head—learn that I recreate myself from my work by studying character. Now, my dear fellow, *you* are a study. I understand you thoroughly : an easy, calm, benevolent, quiet person. That’s the reason you like money. A man must like something in life. I’ve said this to myself, when I was ‘plumbing’ you, as I may call it—forgive the operation. A man *must* like something ; and you like making money, in order to do good with it, as in the case of that foreigner. That is all very well. But what on earth put it into your head to invest in the landlordship of a Smithfield tavern, and of that low ‘house of call for drovers ?’ And how

could you think that a profit was to be made of such a purchase ? ”

“ There is a profit, you see,” replied Harding quietly. “ If I had commissioned you to resell this very day, I should have realized how much ? ”

“ Some hundreds,” answered Falconer, airily, and, as it were, superiorly ; “ yes, yes, I know that the fact is so. But, excuse me, I am nervous for you, with your inexperience in these matters, and your natural simplicity. Money is a ticklish affair, believe me. The idea, now of your just happening to meet the landlord in a railway carriage, and hearing him abuse the papers for creating a panic about Smithfield market. Why, there was a panic, Harding : all the journals, all the press, were and are agreed about the necessity of removing the market out of the midst of this too crowded metropolis, and then what becomes of property of that sort—shambles no longer shambles ?

No wonder the man was prudent in time, and desired to sell—the wonder is, that you should buy. It has succeeded this time, I admit; but do be cautious, that's a good fellow."

"I will," said Cuthbert. "By-the-by, that private bill which Mr. Bradworth is getting through the House——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Falconer, "there's another precious idea. Because you find people complaining of parliamentary agents as so many sharks, you conclude it must be a good thing to be a parliamentary agent, and you go and get up the whole business in no time. If it were a regular profession, like the Bar, I grant you. A pro-fession," added Tom, with dignity, "is a pro-fession; but you'll only burn your fingers this way, in the end—mark my words. Now, there is Lord Havisfling, again—what can you do with such a man as that? Head and ears involved—no sense, you know. If it had

been a clever, rich peer, his friendship and influence would advance a man, of course. But Havisfling ! Everything in the grip of usurers—fifteen per cent. My dear Harding, why waste your naturally good intelligence on such a ruin ? And then your style of doing it—— ”

“ I am aware, of course, that you would never play the usurer, even if you had the requisite capital,” continued Tom. “ And I fully allow that it is well to consult an excellent heart ; but to let it carry one away in a mere business transaction, and to seek in the other direction—I mean, in imposing a lower rate of interest—the means of making one’s own fortune, this I call being transported by instinctive kindness of disposition, with a vengeance. It is being too good ; and—you must pardon my wit—on my honour, it is also too bad. }

“ The transfer of creditors has been effected, however,” observed Harding, who seemed

amused ; “ and the difference between the fifteen per cent. and the ten per cent. actually restores to Lord Havisfling a positive income : a commodity which he had ceased to possess.”

“ Oh ! I fully grant you the particular facts,” replied Falconer, resuming his gravity with gentle earnestness. “ It is only the obliging tendency in general which you have to guard against. Besides, Lord Havisfling is a gainer—but you ? ”

“ Well,” returned Cuthbert, contentedly, “ I got my commission from Messrs. Humboldt, who superseded Messrs. Issachar. Even the reduced interest was ample enough to induce them to allow me a very handsome bonus. But let us talk of love. That was a mere case of reckless mismanagement rectified into a more moderate mismanagement. Let us talk, I repeat, of this love of yours for some lady.”

“ One word more,” said Falconer. “ I

have a very curious thing to tell you." And he looked knowingly at Harding.

"What curious thing?" asked Harding.

"Why," resumed Falconer, "when I first went to Messrs. Humbold, according to your instructions, I found that they referred to you as Lord Havisfling's agent in this business."

"Ay?" said Cuthbert, puckering his lips.

"That was all very well and very right," pursued Falconer. "But, only conceive, when I then saw Lord Havisfling, he would persist in alluding to you as the agent of Messrs. Humbold!"

"What did you say?" demanded Cuthbert.

"Say? I said—'My lord, you will pardon me,' said I; 'the expression I used was legally correct. My friend, Mr. Cuthbert Harding, pending this transaction, may be styled your lordship's own agent, in good phrase of law.'"

“What did he say?” again demanded Cuthbert.

“Harding,” returned Falconer, emphatically, “he said a thing that was not courteous—no, not if he were twice a Peer.

“Is this the curious thing you had to tell me?”

“Yes,” remarked Falconer. “Messrs. Humbold knew you for his lordship’s agent, and you were so. What makes it the more odd is, that my lord himself should not only have been ignorant of, or should have forgotten this circumstance, but actually talked of you as the agent of the opposite party in the negotiation.”

“Well,” observed Cuthbert, “it does not signify; he will not make that mistake any more; he is so content with what I did for him in this affair, that I am now to be the agent of his estates, with, of course, the use of the rents for half a year at a time, more or less, besides the percentage.”

“My goodness!” cried Falconer; “why, that is worth I don’t know how many briefs.”

“Without a pro-fession,” said Cuthbert, dropping the words out in a sort of drawl, and with a thoughtful look. “Talking of briefs, do you begin to get many?”

“Oh! lately,” said Falconer, “I have been doing very well. Those cases—but, bless me, you know all about them: it was you who threw them in my way. This may have put it into my head that the time is come, for which I have waited very patiently. And so has she.”

“Ah! tell me about that,” replied Cuthbert; “for although I am not exactly in the line, as you say, I have sympathy for a friend.”

Tom then gave a hitch to his spectacles, and said—

“She was my first brief, Harding—my very first. And I would not take a sixpence

for the world when I carried her through—which I had the good fortune to do most triumphantly. She and her mother were grateful. That began it.”

“The name was ?” said Cuthbert.

“And is,” returned Falconer, “although it will not always be—Lucy Derwent. She has accepted me. She is slight, small, and so pretty—beautiful, I call her ; but the mother is not exactly what you would term a fine woman, being rather big ; but she is so good—there is not an ounce of harm in a ton of her.”

“That is a great point,” observed Cuthbert ; “still there is not a ton of her, I hope. And, as to property ?”

“Well,” replied Tom, “not much of that. There is what I saved for them according to the marriage settlement, in the case of Derwent *versus* Derwent. You must have heard of the case.”

“I have had so much on my hands,” expostulated Cuthbert.

"True, very true," said Falconer; "it will have escaped you. But it was a cruel case, I assure you. I tell the mother that she has treasure enough in having such a daughter; and, as to the daughter, she will enrich me in any case, you know."

"I am glad of that," said Cuthbert.

"I felt sure you would be," responded Tom; "she is an estate in herself."

"Oh!" said Cuthbert; "I thought you meant—— But I see now: impossible to be more amiable."

"Impossible!" said Tom, expansively "Their little establishment itself is all one fragrance of goodness. Like mistress, like servant. The little girl, I say, who waits on them, would be enough to make you guess what sort of people they are."

"Really?" ejaculated Cuthbert, with interest.

"Even so, I assure you," pursued Tom; "I was impressed with this kind of instinc-

tive induction yesterday. I arrived—the girl did not see me, but was returning from some message, just before me—and I declare I was quite struck as I noticed her primming along, with a large hole in her shoe, and a high sense of decorum.”

“Excellent!” said Cuthbert.

“I thought you would see it,” resumed Falconer; “knows whom she serves. But Harding, Harding, I was so annoyed, yesterday—I was on fire.”

“What happened?”

“Two things happened,” continued Falconer. “I had persuaded Lucy and her mother to take a walk with me, and the conversation turned upon general subjects, until it came to books, and Lucy asked me what I would recommend? And, as I took some time to turn that point over in my mind, Lucy then playfully demanded what were my own books of entertainment, what modern, what recent things? ‘Well,’ said I,

“ ‘Chitty’s Practice’ is not a bad thing, when one is tired ; ‘Sugden on Vendors,’ too, is a sweet book,’ said I.”

“What a very apt remark of yours !” cried Cuthbert. “Is that the large volume I always see on the right of your——”

“No, no,” interrupted Falconer ; “you are thinking of ‘Blackstone’s Commentaries’—(nice light reading, that). But let me tell you what occurred in the fields : a fellow—a scoundrel, I may call him—very handsome, well dressed, but a cadaverous thing—meets us ; it was near the road, and his private cab and tiger were waiting for him over the stile. And he stops and stares at Lucy. Stares, Harding, *stares* at her.”

“Villain !” observed Cuthbert.

“And he said,” pursued Falconer, who became pale with agitation, “he said, as he turned and looked right under her bonnet—he actually said, loud enough for us all to hear him—‘Devilish pretty girl, that.’”

“What did you do?” asked Harding.

“Do? what could I do? But I heard his name. At least, a friend of his, lounging near the cab, addressed him (with an oath for delaying) as Hildering or Wildering, or something like it.”

“It was not Childering?”

“Yes, it was,” cried Tom. “And then, just as we were re-entering the cottage, after our walk, I happened to look round, and what should I behold, dogging us at a safe distance?”

“What?” asked Cuthbert.

“To ask you to guess is useless,” resumed Tom: “you never would—you are too simple. It was that scoundrel’s tiger. Think of that! I could almost have doubled my fist.”

Cuthbert with difficulty restrained a smile, but he succeeded.

“Very annoying,” said he. “But you mentioned that there was a second thing which had put you out.”

“Ah ! yes,” returned Falconer. “It was quite an evening of vexations. I wore this large, loose, light-coloured coat—which I consider very stylish and of a lively, wake-up character—and I keep it buttoned, so. It gives you rather the appearance of a dashing, desperate sort of fellow—and the women like that, you know. To tell you the truth, it was an innocent imposture, designed to have a certain effect on Lucy ; for she is imaginative—yea, romantic. It would show her that her lover was not a heavy, dull dog, you understand ?”

“Perfectly,” replied Harding, with gravity. “And, perhaps, she told you, after all, that she did not think it became you ?”

“Ah ! it was worse than that,” responded Tom, sighing. “Indeed, I have my reasons for thinking that the coat would have pleased Lucy herself ; although, at first, she used to steal a look at me, every now and then, as I sauntered in an easy,

graceful manner by her side. She has a sly humour of her own, and all would have gone off famously, but for a slight incident. One of those shameless urchins that you meet everywhere—a butcher's boy, I think—was coming along the path, whistling. When he saw me, he stopped and said, 'My eye! there's a coat!' With great tact, I began to talk loud, to prevent Lucy dwelling on his words; but she happened to be seized with a fit of coughing, and had her handkerchief to her mouth, so that she did not notice. But that young demon waited for us. I looked sternly at him, as we passed, in order to overawe him; and guess what he cried out."

"I'm sure I cannot," said Cuthbert.

"Harding," resumed Tom, much moved, "he called out—'Who wants a coachman?' In vain I tried to look unconscious. Lucy looked at me from head to foot with one more of those sly glances of hers, and actually

burst out laughing—I remaining lofty, grave, dignified, but hurt, Harding—hurt !”

A silence of half a minute followed this touching communication.

“Of course it is made up,” Tom then said ; “and all that is wanting, in order to name the day, is a certain sum of money. I have nearly reached it. A few more months of hard work, and I’m all right. Marriage is a great responsibility in life, Harding.”

“How soon do you think,” asked Cuthbert, after a pause, “that you will have achieved this saving ?”

“In a year, or a year and a half, even at my present rate of practice,” replied Falconer. “I want only two hundred and twenty pounds of it now.”

“Then get the day named at once, and I’ll come to the wedding,” cried Cuthbert ; “for on this day two months you shall have—I will advance you—the needful, and await the balance myself.”

Tom sprang from his chair, into which Cuthbert immediately forced him down again, by main force, saying—

“If you utter one word on the subject, you insult me !”

“Insult you !” gulped out poor Falconer —“insult you ! Oh ! Harding, I—I——”

“Yes ; insult me,” interposed the other ; “I know what I can do, and what I am doing. You would not wish to insult me, I know. Therefore consider this matter as settled ; and say not a word.”

“A gentleman for you, sir,” said the porter, opening the door.

The stranger entered as Falconer went out ; and Falconer went out so flustered that he never noticed who came in. But the door was immediately opened again, and Tom thrust in his head.

“Harding,” said he, “I must speak, or I shall choke. You are——”

Notwithstanding that he “must speak,” he could not.

Falconer's spectacles were dim, as he walked to his solitary chambers that evening.

Harding perceived that his new visitor was not Mr. Algernon, but the elder brother, Mr. George Childering.

"I have come before my time," remarked that easy personage ; and then he proceeded to explain to Cuthbert that, in order to save trouble and time, and, above all, any discussion—(a thing which he said he could not stand)—he had just jotted down on a bit of paper what he wanted Harding to do for him, and under what circumstances.

"I would rather that you looked over it in my absence, and when I return—after dining—you can then answer me with merely 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Very well," said Cuthbert, taking the paper coldly.

"You will perceive, or you will guess," continued Childering, "that marriage is mixed up in my plans. Marriage, Harding, is a great card in life !"

Cuthbert, curiously enough, was, at that moment, pondering on Tom's remark, that marriage "was a great responsibility in life"—and the difference between the expressions struck him. Which of them struck him the more will soon appear.

Mr. George Childering was a singular mixture. A common fool may have uncommon abilities. Folly much rather consists in the misapplication of talent and of sense, than in the want of them.

Here were two young men, in that dingy old office, both of whom had very considerable, and, indeed, one of them, very extraordinary powers; and yet which was the more deluded fool, it would be perplexing to determine. Cuthbert, who was the superior of the two in force and vividness of mind, or of intellect, was probably the worse fool in reality.

But, at least, he betrayed not his folly in the same obvious manner as did Mr. George

Childering. His conversation showed no levity or incoherency of mind.

“Yes,” pursued Mr. George, “marriage is a great card, in certain cases. This is a widow: young, pretty, and rich. Her husband, an old foggy, died some twenty months ago, and was found to cut up astonishingly.”

“Cut up!” said Cuthbert. “That is——”

“Left her,” retorted Childering, “an ornament to society. He surprised the world at his death.”

“Sudden, I suppose,” said Cuthbert.

“Don’t know, I’m sure,” returned Childering. “He died worth nearly a hundred thousand pounds.”

Here Childering rose, yawned, stretched himself, and took his hat, observing, in conclusion—

“Well, you will look over those documents? I shall come back some time.”

“Not to-night?” said Cuthbert, thinking of Algernon’s appointment.

“Yes, to-night,” said Childering, quickly. “Do you think I could wait till to-morrow to know my fate?”

“You are so in love with this widow,” said Cuthbert.

“I am in love with nothing,” returned the other; “but——” And he added something about Derwent.

“There is one thing,” observed Cuthbert, gravely, “which I would impress on you, and that is, the necessity of dropping your amusements in that quarter. They will give annoyance.”

“Annoyance!” cried Childering, who was now going out, but stopped. “That is the best part of it. If you had seen the youth——”

“I know him,” said Cuthbert; “and it is not with him you will have to do.”

“With whom, then, I pray you?” demanded Childering, haughtily.

“With me!” returned Harding.

The other looked fixedly and in silence at him. Harding returned the glance with quiet meaning.

“What ! you really dare !” said Childering.

“That is a mere flattering of yourself,” observed Cuthbert. “There is no daring in the matter. If there were,” added he, slowly, and with a smile, “why, I believe, I could dare considerably more than that.”

“What am I to understand ?” asked Childering.

“That I request you not to annoy Miss Lucy Derwent,” said Cuthbert, with a great emphasis on the word request.

“In other words, such are your orders,” remarked Childering.

Cuthbert reflected a moment, and then said—

“It is not like a man of the world to insist on making me less courteous than I wish to be. My own preference is for the word I have used. I again request you.”

Childering's cadaverous face turned a bright crimson. Controlling himself, with a prodigious effort, he said—

“ Good-bye for the present ; good-bye, in all amity, my dear fellow. I will see you again to-night.”

CHAPTER XII.

HE had been gone about two hours, when his brother Algernon was shown into Cuthbert's room.

"You wanted to speak with me," said Algernon, as soon as he had seated himself in the chair which his brother had just occupied.

"I wanted to ask you," said Cuthbert, "what you meant when you spoke of my advantage over you, or of my success?"

"Well, it was but an inference of mine," replied Algernon. "I ought, perhaps, to have said, my own defeat."

"Your defeat!" said Cuthbert. "Do forgive me, but is it to our rivalry—to—to Miss Whitsund you allude?"

“Yes ; to her reception of my addresses,” returned Algernon. “I thought I might talk of your success, since me she has rejected.”

“Rejected you !” exclaimed Cuthbert. “Well, but that was no reason why I should not express my sorrow to you for an insane, an unworthy, provocation.”

“It is forgiven twice over, long since,” replied Algernon. “You will, no doubt, marry this lady. Marriage is a great responsibility in life.” (Falconer’s very words, thought Cuthbert.) “I could, I imagined, have rendered her existence happy. Do you no less.”

“We are ridiculous mortals,” said Cuthbert ; “and I want a promise from you. Without flattery, you are a competitor to dread. True, the promise seems superfluous ; but it would be a great satisfaction to me——”

“What is it ?” asked Algernon.

“That you will never, during my lifetime, renew your addresses to, or hold even any communication whatsoever with, Miss Whitsund?”

“That costs me—loses me, nothing, I believe,” returned Algernon, “and I give it to you freely.”

“Give me your hand on it.”

“There it is,” said Algernon, “and my solemn word of honour to boot.”

“I am content, now,” said Harding, with a smile; “for *my* life you are bound fast.” And he wrung his visitor’s hand.

“I am going abroad,” said Algernon. “I shall probably be years away. Farewell!”

Before he reached the door, it was thrown open with some violence, and Mr. George Childering entered.

“Is it done, or is it undone, Harding?” demanded he.

“Not done to-night,” said Cuthbert. “I have had no time yet.”

“That’s unhandsome,” said Childering, who now noticed his brother, with whom he quarrelled about his conduct at the election, till Cuthbert interposed.

Algernon then coloured violently, but said with a smile—

“We knew how to give and take once, did we not, dear George? I believe that you love me at heart, in spite of all you can do ; only you fancy I set myself up as your superior. The thought never came near me ; and now that you force me to look at it, I must confess that it might seem so. You are able to beat me in fifty things, in which you do not care to try, and never did care.”

The elder brother smiled, and gave his hand.

“There,” said he ; “you are going away. Perhaps we shall never meet again.”

Within a week, Cuthbert sold the property, to which Falconer had alluded ; and the profit far more than covered what he had

lent to Falconer. For a long time, Cuthbert Harding prospered more and more, while still playing what may be termed the private game. His reinvestments, after he had become Lord Havisfling's agent, were almost all great successes ; but he thus got a habit of impatient and restless reinvestment ; and his more public game was about to begin. He brought to it extensive resources ; but he brought, also, the dangerous help of surreptitious information—a Traitor's periodical hints. The Traitor was a great man's private secretary ; and it was to his master, or chief, the secretary was a Traitor.

One night, Cuthbert—who had established an understanding with this individual, making his rewards conditional upon, and proportionate to, results—was awakened by a violent ringing.

It was the official Traitor, with a hint about a certain provision in the coming budget. Cuthbert acted on the hint. An

incredible profit was realized thus at a single blow. The Traitor's first hint was valuable.

But his second hint was yet to come ; once more, Cuthbert was to hear that bell in the dead of night. Once more, he was to act according to "office" thus obtained—staking this time on the issue, fortune, love, and life itself.

Meanwhile, his public game had begun. Disposing of such enormous deposits as his own multifarious accounts, swoln by the temporary use of Lord Havisfling's rents, enabled him to command, his custom was of immense importance to the bank which he favoured. He was not only its best man, but worth to it any three other of its depositors ; and, with a few exceptions, indeed, any ten of them together. It was natural he should become a director—natural he should be able to introduce into the direction friends who could form resolutions sure to pass.

But this was miserably short of his requirements. He had taken care, as early as possible, to make good the ground in his rear, by scrupulously discharging the single curious obligation which galled his remembrance, though it had aided his start.

About fifteen months after Cuthbert's first departure for London, Sir Walter Mandeville happened to meet Mr. William Harding in a recent railway cutting, which Sir Walter had been investigating for some strange old fossil fragments, stated to have been there discovered.

Says Sir Walter, to Mr. William Harding—

“You need not have been in such a hurry to pay *that*!”

Says Mr. William, to Sir Walter—

“To pay what?”

“The fourteen hundred pounds. You know what I mean,” pursued Sir Walter.

“Excuse me,” retorted Mr. William ;

“but I have not the remotest notion of what you mean.”

“Your letter was a very proper one; indeed, both your letters; but we need not continue the subject,” remarked Sir Walter. “So you sold the brewery to enormous advantage? Extraordinary incident that, at the auction! Odd conduct of Brompton!”

They parted, after a few more enigmatical exchanges of good words. Sad and even tremendous was the reflection to Mr. Harding, as Cuthbert’s father—sad, but chiefly as giving him uneasy and vigilant interest in the young Money-spinner’s movements.

Meanwhile, Cuthbert himself never put sword in scabbard; for being victorious, it blazed in the restless right hand, at the van of a thousand hazards.

Referring to his position as new director in an old bank, he said to himself—

“It strikes me now,” quoth he, “that this is but little, my beloved Emily! Lord

Nelson vowed he would one day have a Gazette of his own ; and so I vow I'll have now a bank of my own ! ”

He had reached the time, when—taciturn, absent, pale, and even haggard—he found way made for him and his eternal black bag, with the Chubb lock, among the thrones and principalities of Mammon. He had reached this stage in his career, when, one evening, wending his way homewards, to a western palace, he meditated a decisive action : but, ere writing to Emily, he was destined now for the second time to hear the Traitor's bell ring at his door in the dead of night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE reader has seen that Cuthbert Harding's social position was in a hundred ways changed since that bright and beautiful afternoon of an English June, when he and Geoffrey Mandeville had arrived from Eton, ignorant and happy, at the pretty town of Huntingferry.

About seven years had elapsed. Little Henrietta Mandeville was eighteen—Emily Whitsund, nearly twenty-four. Mr. William Harding was no longer in trade ; and Miss Winnifrid Harding (a brilliant, witty, warm-hearted, and even beautiful, girl of seventeen) was whispered among the rising youth to be a great “catch,” as the Money-spinner's sister.

He had arrived at the day, on the night succeeding which, he was destined to hear, for the second time, the Traitor's bell at the dead, silent hour.

Venturesome as he was, he had never, save once, and never legitimately, ventured so much as on that day; and now, in the afternoon, he slowly took his way, on foot, through the streets of London, towards his new and very fine house in the neighbourhood of Westbourne Terrace.

When Harding, having knocked at his own door, had been admitted, and had cast a hurried glance over the cards and notes which littered his hall table, jerking them peevishly from him again, a footman approached, and said—

“Mr. Rosebriar has called three 'casions, sir; am I to say you's at home, when he comes a second time?”

Harding, flinging down his hat on the table with a heavy sigh, passed on, without

replying, into the library. The man followed, and repeated his question.

“When he comes again,” said Harding, “show him in here.”

As Cuthbert threw himself into his chair, when left alone, he muttered—“Rosebriar ! Rosebriar ! Where have I met that man, before he found me out in the City ? ”

The servant, whose name was Saunders (a big son of the little old postboy, that formerly carried the letter bag of Mandeville Park), remarked, as he lounged in the hall, to the butler—

“Our master looks thundering queer. I don’t think all’s easy everywhere with him. I don’t like it, mind you.”

“What’s amiss, young man ? ” returned the porter ; “the wages is good.”

“The wages is good ! ” said Saunders, who could read and write ; “I don’t say different. But I like to see more of the sun in a master’s face.”

“ Well ! ” said the porter.

A fidgety, uncertain knock came to the door that evening ; and Saunders, opening the library, announced to Cuthbert Harding — “ Mr. Rosebriar.”

As the servant withdrew again, his foot rustled against a bit of paper. He took it to the light, in the hall, and perceived it was an open letter. Before he knew what to do with it, his eye was caught by the name of “ Mandeville,” so familiar to him, and, without the least wish to pry, he saw these words—“ You, as my daughter, Henrietta Mandeville’s trustee.”

At that moment the library door opened precipitately, and Mr. Rosebriar came peering into the hall.

“ Did you drop a letter, sir ? ” inquired Saunders, who had folded it again.

“ Ah ! ” said Mr. Rosebriar, “ I feared it might be in the street,” and he seized the letter, with a sort of hungry eye, and was back in the library immediately.

The words, "you as Henrietta Mandeville's trustee," were of no importance to Saunders. But what would not Cuthbert Harding have given, to have seen them? More than Saunders could have believed to be in the gift of less than a duke.

Mr. Rosebriar was again in the library, and an eager, hungry, glance hovered and fluttered over Cuthbert's haggard face, as Mr. Rosebriar leant with an elbow on the chimney-piece.

"Where have you seen me?" said he. "I know not; until I met you on that business, I never met you, that I'm aware."

"And you are pleased with that business?" asked Harding.

"How could I be otherwise?" returned the visitor. "The profits were enormous. I am very glad, indeed, that I trusted to your judgment. The fact is, I must be doing something—it keeps me alive. Do you feel as confident of the result this time?"

"As confident?" replied Harding, slowly—"I have examined this matter far more carefully than the other."

"Because," said Mr. Rosebriar, "I could make my share in it larger. I have been reflecting on what you said about my scruple respecting trust-money."

"Why, you should not benefit the person whose welfare is entrusted to you, as well as yourself," replied Harding. "I remember the argument. If, as trustee, no less than as first and real owner, you had joined that business, your trust ward would be richer, at this moment. Is it not the fact?"

"Much richer," replied Rosebriar.

"But," resumed he, "I am differently circumstanced at present. All my own money is gone—locked up in another affair, from which it would be ruinous to draw it yet. In brief, I could venture a very large sum—but it is all trust-money this time."

Harding wanted money, little as this was

imagined, and he cared not much for his visitor's conscience.

“Do as you please,” said he; “that is your consideration.”

“I thought,” said the other, “it might be an opportunity of compensating my ward in trust for the former neglect; and I might embargo out of the profit enough to pay myself for the anxiety and trouble, while still enriching her.”

“Her!” said Harding, carelessly; “it is a woman's, then. Do as you think best. For my part, I do not see why you should grudge benefiting your ward, any more than yourself. I do not, indeed. And you can, as you say, stop enough out of the proceeds to indemnify pains taken.”

“How long will it be,” asked the other, “before we can realize?”

“A matter of a fortnight, more or less,” said Harding.

Next day Henrietta Mandeville's money

(not for an instant suspected to be hers, but known, at least, to be trust), went out for a short trip in a boat of Cuthbert Harding's, which was really not certain ever to come to port again.

Meanwhile, on the night that followed Mr. Rosebriar's call, the Traitor who was the statesman's secretary (not intentionally any traitor to Harding, but to his own chief who trusted him), came, as he had come once before, and gave Cuthbert very important information. Cuthbert had his foot entangled here in a net of precisely the same sort as that which, through his act, had ensnared Mr. Rosebriar. As his first transaction with the Traitor had prospered exceedingly, he felt not a moment's hesitation in availing himself of his information a second time; and availing himself of it, he lost, at a single blow, nearly five times the amount of Henrietta's hazarded fortune. The chances seemed auspicious.

Such was the Money-spinner's exact position, when one evening, as before, he took his way on foot to his house ; only in still deeper gloom and abstraction.

Harding reached home, and with the same peevish jerk, pitched his hat on the hall table, and hastened to the library. Saunders again remarked to the butler—

“ I don't like it, mind you. Did you see how he flung down the hat ? Wages isn't all.”

And the porter again said—“ Well ! ”

Meanwhile, Harding was buried in his solitary armchair. It was a foggy evening ; a fire burned in the grate ; the shaded lamp stood behind him on the large writing table ; and Harding stared at the fire, in deep thought.

Did he then remember Emily, who for him had sacrificed so much ? Yes, even now he is meditating a great step in her regard.

There was a document, a deed, securely locked in some strong box, in some fireproof room, somewhere in or near Chancery Lane. To Harding it had been worth comparatively little, although the sum might sound formidable.

But now, powerful, honoured, and courted as he was, he would have given twice the sum, to hold that deed in his hand once more for half a minute. Twice the sum ! Nay, he would have given this to know just where it was.

But how long had he been so solicitous to regain it ? Since its recovery was beyond his power. Formerly it had been easy for him to have commanded its repossession. But now he was positively unable, and, at the bare thought, he shuddered from head to foot.

He had bought of Lord Havisfling a small property, situated in Lancashire ; and Lord Havisfling had another and larger, a much

larger property, situated in Yorkshire ; the deed of conveyance had been mortgaged by Harding at a moment when his bank required propping up ; and propped up the bank was, for the time. So it was the deed of the small Lancashire property which he wanted to get back. The firm who had it would have told you that it was the deed of the large Yorkshire property, with the seals on, duly signed, delivered and attested, but the conveyance had not yet been registered.

Harding sat staring at the fire. He thought of his uncle's cruel invective, and of Emily ; and it was with a strange, wistful yearning that he recalled the old times, and the old dreams, and the old projects, and the plight exchanged (in the sweet days of youth, in the glorious morning time of life) under the lowly hawthorn. He had once reminded her of their castle building. Was it not rather cottage building ?

“Why,” thought he, “did I not stop then ?—or then ?—or then ?”

While he was thus brooding, a slight incident showed a great change in the Money-spinner. The time had been, when no catastrophe short of "the crack of doom" could have produced any sudden or violent effect on the outward man. But he now literally bounded in his chair at the loud, abrupt knock of the postman. It was the last post delivery of the day. In some matters, if it rains, it pours. When the servant entered with the letter, Harding did not look round. When the servant had gone, he tore open the seal with feverish anxiety. It was a letter from the firm who held the deed of conveyance, saying that they did not want it taken up forthwith; but that an ugly rumour had reached them about his country bank, and, unless he took up the deed, they would send it to York to be registered, the next day but one.

Harding had something to think of as he stared at the fire that evening. He was

moving fast, although he was seated in that armchair—and he was moving upon the slippery brink of a dizzy height. The perspiration poured invisibly from the straining brain, and a certain pull was felt inwardly along his hitherto unconquerable nerves. Without uttering them, the words now rang in his ears—“Marriage is a great card in life.” He had always preserved and cultivated his relations with the Mandevilles.

Little guessing whose was that trust money which he had persuaded Mr. Rosebriar to embark in a fatal venture—little knowing what had become of Henrietta Mandeville’s fortune, and by whose act the heiress was made portionless, he pushed back his chair, took an envelope, which he addressed to Emily Whitsund at his uncle’s rectory, and then placed before him a sheet of letter paper which was to fill that envelope, and to determine his destiny.

But his hand, for more than an hour, refused to write the words which would terminate for ever that engagement for which he had long battled so desperately—and which he had hoped so soon to change into a more final union.

Emily Whitsund was the only woman whom he had ever loved. Henrietta Man-deville might feel an interest in Cuthbert, but although he knew this interest, he returned it not. Yet the fatal deed must be recovered; must not be registered. The firm would grant him two months: he felt certain of that. They had known from the outset that it would never do for it to transpire that he, Harding, had instantly mortgaged an estate which he had only just bought. Indeed, when borrowing on the large Yorkshire property a sum which more than covered all he had actually paid for the small Lancashire estate, he had given that very pretext for stipulating that the

deed should not be registered. He would get two months now. Within that time, Henrietta's portion should rescue the deed.

Thinking it was better to settle the point of respite or reprieve first, he sent Saunders to the nearest cab-stand, and, without writing his letter to Emily, drove straight to the private residence of the gentleman from whom he had received the letter which had troubled him so sorely. He got his two months, and ten days to boot, that same night.

Once more in his library, he began and finished, in a passion of tears, the letter which resigned the only hand he prized on earth for its own sake. But he could not bring himself to post that letter immediately. He tried. He went to the post-office with it, held it over the receiving box. No ; he could not do it. After walking past the letter box more than once, he finally resolved that he

would keep the letter back for the ten days which he had gained over and above his two months.

During those ten days, an event which would have been momentous, indeed, to him, had he but guessed it, was being worked out some three hundred miles away.

On the very night—when he was weeping in solitude and secrecy over the fatal letter, but yet writing it—on that very night, the pickaxe turned up a vein of iron and coal on a little property of Mr. Brompton's, adjoining Emily's small estate of Christ's Hope, for which he was the agent. Following out the lode, he satisfied himself, beyond all doubt, next morning, that it was not his, but Miss Whitsund's land, that was enriched with the long unsuspected presence of these chalybeate and carbonic treasures. An indefatigable, as well as keen man, he did not rest, nor return home to Warwick-

shire, till he was able well to calculate what this accession of value was really worth. Previously, three thousand pounds would have been thirty years' purchase of Emily's little inheritance. He made up his mind that he would purchase it, were he to pay fifty thousand pounds. Alas! the "Money-spinner" was now so circumstanced that the fourth part of that sum would have saved him for ever. But would not Henrietta's fortune, also?

On Mr. Brompton's return, he sounded the doctor, who sounded Emily. Now, it so happened, that she had been born on that little northern domain, and that she felt as if it would be breaking her heart to part with it. So Mr. Brompton at once had his "no" from the doctor.

But Mr. Brompton would not take a "no." He rose in his price; and, as he rose in his price, Dr. Marlowe Harding, who, we need not say, was a very shrewd man,

began to suspect something. He taxed Brompton, laughingly, with wanting to cheat his ward; and Brompton replied seriously that he never thought of taking the property for so small a sum; that he would pay down fifty thousand pounds for it, ready money. The doctor, who had, at first, deemed Emily demented for refusing six, or even five thousand pounds, highly commended her refusal of fifty thousand, and said that such a matter required grave consideration; whereupon, Mr. Brompton smiled, nay laughed, made the best of it, and told the truth. Emily Whitsund was become one of the greatest heiresses within a hundred miles round.

The knowledge of this momentous change was not of a nature long to remain a secret; but at that moment it was confined, in its various bearings and full appreciation, to the four individuals collected in Doctor Marlowe Harding's study; and they re-

solved that they would keep it to themselves for a little while. To London it had, of course, had no time to penetrate; and, certainly, the Money-spinner in the library of his fine West End house had not the slightest glimmering suspicion of the fact. What! to be honourable, merely honourable, is to be safe! and to obey, even romantically, the promptings of true love, would be to triumph over all his difficulties. How could he imagine this?

He had divided the time before him, as though he had exactly two months and ten days to live. Long before this epoch, he had embarked what would have seemed to many persons of independence half a dozen little fortunes in the freight of a certain ship, which had been bound, and had been despatched, to the Eastern seas. If Cuthbert Harding's hopes had been realized, she ought to have returned, and placed him far above the necessity of all the shifts to which he

was driven, with their crushing anxieties and the mortal heartwound which those shifts involved. The ship had, indeed, been “spoken” in the Indian Ocean, homeward bound. But, alas ! she was already long over due ; and Harding, with his usual firmness, had given her up ; had assumed her to be as a thing lost, and he would fight on all the same. Yet, at moments, as he sat in his evening solitariness, in that fine house which he had bought for Emily, his thoughts, despite of himself, were divided between Emily and this forlorn hope ; and his mind, after revisiting the old Warwickshire rectory, would, at a single bound, return to the Indian Ocean, and wander, in imagination, over the waste of waters.

Then his spirit came back to his immediate difficulties.

He, at length, determined, within two months, to secure Henrietta Mandeville for his bride, notwithstanding her father’s re-

pugnance and her mother's secret uneasiness. Geoffrey's goodwill he had never lost.

For the ten days in which he still cherished the secret dreams which he was about to dismiss for ever, he had not taken a single step in his new plan. He had, indeed, on one pretext or another, hurried to Mandeville Park, and slept a night there ; and one never to be forgotten evening had he made Henrietta stamp deep his image upon her confiding heart. He had allowed her to learn—to guess—that, years ago, he had been rejected by the lady to whom, in boyhood, he was engaged ; that, years ago, he had been perfidiously treated ; and, years ago, released from his too trustful illusion.

No ; he was not released from it yet. Beyond the step, however, just mentioned, he had rigidly abstained from setting his last resources in motion.

Meanwhile Henrietta's fortune was still in jeopardy, but not lost, when Harding returned to town.

At length, the tenth day passed; and Harding re-opened and read once more his letter to Emily Whitsund. It was the afternoon of the second day after the interview which has been described between Mr. Brompton and the inmates of Doctor Harding's rectory.

This case was before Harding: should he be faithful to the girl who had given up so much for him, and whom he really loved? or, should he sacrifice her to the demon he had hitherto worshipped? The struggle was terrible; but Harding had not listened often enough to one of the two inward voices which now gave him opposite counsels, and had listened too often to the other, to make the decision doubtful; these things merely made it painful—hitherto, his mental torture was not past the relief of tears. Again he wrote the same letter in meaning: and again he broke into a passion of sobs. He threw himself on the ground, and there lay for hours.

If Emily only could have saved him—but the deed! If she would have even fled with him; but she would some day learn all about this deed. No—he must give her up, and, in doing so, give up both love and honour at the same moment, for the sake of triumph over his difficulties, and deliverance from his dangers.

At last he rose, composed his appearance, took the fatal letter, and went into his hall.

“Saunders,” said he, with an air of quietude and indifference, “take this letter to the post.”

“Yes, sir; directly,” replied Saunders.

The master slowly and calmly returned to his room; the man lounged and loitered in the hall, uttering some more philosophy to the butler.

Scarcely had Harding returned to his lonely room, when a violent knocking at the hall door made his heart thump against his

ribs. A moment afterwards, Falconer rushed into the apartment, pale and breathless.

“I congratulate you, my dear Harding!” were the first words which the panting visitor could gasp forth, as he seized Cuthbert’s hand, and wrung it fervently.

“What do you mean?” asked Harding, glaring upon Falconer, with a glance like a spear.

“No mysteries with me!” panted forth Falconer, holding his sides for want of breath (he had been running)—“your uncle, Doctor Harding, has himself sent his solicitor, that I might look over the conveyance, the settlements, and the other deeds. I know all. Who’d have imagined that you, of all men, concealed a romance at the bottom of that strong heart? But all this is idle speculation about characters; what fills my mind now is, your good fortune. You deserve it; you have patiently waited, faithful to your young engagement; it is right

such patience should receive its reward. I congratulate you."

Harding sprung to his feet, and, stamping on the ground, exclaimed furiously.

"Explain yourself, or by the hour that is passing over us, I shall do something desperate."

"Then don't you know? What *she* and all of them have been contriving an agreeable surprise for you? And yet she insists upon your being treated with such princely confidence in the settlements! Will allow but forty to be put out at interest and tied down upon herself, and insists that the remaining sixty thousand pounds shall be handed over to you, freely, unconditionally, without one reserve, without a single stipulation of any kind whatever."

"Of whom are you speaking?" demanded Cuthbert, in a whisper which Falconer heard better and marked more than if it had been a louder tone.

“Why, of whom but Miss Emily Whitsund, of course !” he replied. “Coal and iron have been found upon Christ’s Hope estate. You are rewarded for constancy and faith, for honour, love, and patience.”

Cuthbert looked up to Heaven with an indescribable expression of terror in his face. Falconer had not seen anything like it in that face before.

“Wait for me here,” said Cuthbert, “till I return. Will you ?”

“I will,” said Falconer.

“Word of honour ?” inquired Cuthbert.

“Word of honour,” replied Falconer, solemnly.

Harding then took a bundle of bank notes, which he crammed into his pocket, went into the hall, and, shutting the library door after him upon Falconer, said to Saunders—

“You have posted that letter, of course ?”

“Certainly, sir,” replied Saunders,—fibbing ; “I have posted it.”

Cuthbert looked at his watch as he put on his hat, and pursued—

“At what post-office?”

“At the usual one, sir,” replied Saunders—“the nearest”—and he named it.

Cuthbert rushed forth.

Saunders, terrified by his master's manner, waited only till he had turned the corner of the street, and then slipped out and posted the fatal letter in another post-office.

When Cuthbert reached that where he supposed it was, he explained to the shopwoman, a respectable stationer, that, within the last five or seven minutes, a letter had been dropped into her receiving box: he would describe it before seeing it: he wanted merely to rectify, in her presence, the address.

The letter-carrier had only that moment left her shop with his bag. Where, Harding asked, could he overtake or find him? It was most important. The woman struck

by his visible anxiety, and suspecting no wrong, answered to the best of her ability.

In less than three minutes, Harding had found the letter carrier, bag in hand, hurrying along the street.

Harding repeated his case, adding, that if the man would permit him, in his presence, to rectify the address, he would give him twenty pounds.

“Come into this public house,” said Harding, “we’ll have a glass of porter in a private room; stay, I will make it forty pounds” (he produced two twenty pound notes, one of which he thrust upon the man), “and take half now, half in one moment, when I have scrawled a single word on the superscription of the letter.”

The bag was rifled and examined in the private room of the public house. No such letter was in it. Harding uttered a fierce cry, and, throwing the other note to the man, rushed home.

This time he learnt the truth from Saunders, whom he caught by the throat, and hurled with a giant's force right across his hall, going forth again into the street himself, without one thought about Falconer.

He was scarcely outside his door, when he met Mrs. Marlowe Harding and her niece, Miss Emily Whitsund, whom he supposed to have been in the country. Emily stretched out her hand to him, and said they were coming to him with pleasant news.

He took the dear hand, for ever lost, like one in a trance ; said they would find his mother ; and sped away from them as a man distraught or doomed.

Looking after him, till he had disappeared, they ascended the steps of his house, regretting that the doctor could not have joined them, nor leave his rectory till next day. They were shown by the scared footman into the library, where they found Mr. Falconer, who told them that he had

anticipated them ; and that Cuthbert Harding already knew of Emily's altered fortune.

Meanwhile, Cuthbert first went to the other post-office, and found that his letter was now entirely beyond his reach. He then, reflecting that Emily was in town, took the night mail to Warwickshire ; and early next morning, before any one else could come for it, proceeded to the post-office where his letter must be. He stated that he was stopping at the rectory of *Panes cum Piscibus*, and that, as he had some business in Throstledale, Dr. Harding had requested him to ask for any letters that might have come addressed either to the doctor, or Miss Emily Whitsund.

But who shall contend against Providence ? Not in the end, not when the time is ripe, he “ who never has prayed.” Just while the postmistress was busy sorting her little packet, and just as she was saying—

“ Yes, sir ; there are three letters for the

doctor ; and that is all ; no—beg pardon, sir, here is also one for Miss Whatsund.”

At this moment, a sonorous “hem !” startled both her and Cuthbert, and they looked round.

Dr. Marlowe Harding was himself in the shop.

What could Cuthbert do ? I pass over the exquisite little scene which followed, when the doctor shook his nephew’s hand, congratulated him, and to the postmistress’s scandal, asked him what on earth had brought him to Throstledale ?

One chance more remained. The letter was marked “private.” The doctor recognized his nephew’s handwriting ; said he could not go to town that day—but would forward the lover’s fond letter.

“Well done, *patience* !” cried the doctor, slapping his nephew on the shoulder ; and the nephew forthwith returned to town. It was evening when he arrived.

He never put his head under a roof that night. He perambulated the streets till grey dawn ; yes, till the nine o'clock post.

When the first post of the day arrived at the hotel where Emily and her aunt were lodging, Cuthbert stood in the doorway.

No letter for either Mrs. Harding or Miss Whitsund.

With a low cry, Cuthbert was turning away, when a railway cab, piled with luggage, drove up, and Dr. Marlowe Harding descended.

Cuthbert paused spellbound. The doctor caught sight of him.

“What! nephew,” whispered he, approaching, “love vigils ; I’ll be bound you were here early, gazing at windows, and conjecturing which was hers. Never mind ; though you have not seen her yet to-day, your letter shall stand you proxy at breakfast, and shall converse for you with the lady that you love. I have it here. I say again, Well done, patience !”

The sleepless watcher turned away, never destined to know again what quiet slumber was, and reached his home ghastly and fevered.

He found Falconer, who had never quitted the house, stretched on a sofa in the library, fast asleep.

"I congrat——" began poor Falconer, rubbing his eyes, and sitting up.

"Falconer," said Harding, in a hollow voice, "you are under some monstrous delusion. I shall never marry Miss Whitsund. But I shall have something for you to do professionally concerning my early and almost immediate marriage with Miss Henrietta Mandeville."

About a week had passed, and Cuthbert's last plan had succeeded beyond his own hopes, when Mr. Rosebriar was announced.

"I am uneasy about the turn this affair seems to be taking," said the visitor.

"So am I," said Cuthbert.

“But *my* share in it,” said Rosebriar, “was trust money, as I told you.”

Cuthbert shrugged his shoulders.

“And it was you, it was *you* who persuaded me to venture it,” urged Rosebriar.

Cuthbert shrugged his shoulders again.

“We must take the rough,” said he, “if we take the smooth. The chances were good.”

Mr. Rosebriar knew nothing of the matrimonial project.

The day for the wedding was named. It was to be a strictly private marriage. On that day, Cuthbert Harding ascertained about his and Mr. Rosebriar’s recent venture, enough to make him exclaim—

“Well, it is lucky that I shall have Henrietta’s fortune. That will tide me through this ill starred and unaccountable pressure.”

A few days before the marriage, certain deeds had to be signed, and Cuthbert

received an invitation to meet Geoffrey and “Henrietta’s trustee” at Falconer’s chambers.

“It is well there be more trustees than one in the world,” muttered Cuthbert, as he put his hat on in his hall, and sauntered forth to keep this appointment.

CHAPTER XIV.

“I MENTIONED to them,” Falconer had remarked, “that I had apprised you of your great luck, as I certainly considered it.”

“Mentioned this to whom?” cried Cuthbert.

“To Miss Whitsund and Mrs. Harding,” answered Falconer, innocently.

“Alas!” exclaimed Cuthbert. “There is a league to confound, as well as to destroy me!”

After a long silence, he begged Falconer’s forgiveness with a smile like a spasm.

As Cuthbert Harding proceeded to Lincoln’s Inn, a few days afterwards, the words

of his uncle continued ringing in his ears like a scoff, though, in all likelihood, not spoken with that intent — “ Well done, patience ! ”

Patience was, he felt, exactly the faculty he wanted. Algernon Childering, notwithstanding the effervescence of a vivid genius, had it constitutionally. But Cuthbert felt that, quite irrespectively of patience or impatience, Algernon would never, in his circumstances, have lost Emily’s immense fortune ; because Algernon would have remained inflexibly true to Emily’s comparative poverty.

“ I have lost the only love of my whole existence,” thought poor Harding, “ in order to secure a fortune with a wife who can never have my heart ; and now it turns out that, with the love, I was actually throwing away more money than I threw it away for — many times more. I was in a dreadful position ; true. But by simply continuing

faithful to honour, to my own best affections, and to a plain rule of duty, I should literally, it seems, have been consulting my interests, and surmounting my difficulties a thousand times more efficiently. Who would have thought it? Had I disdained this suggestion of a heartless cunning, it might then, indeed, and with positive truth have been at this moment said to me—‘Well done, patience.’ Yes, and ‘well done, honour; well done, courage; well done, truth.’

“They tell us,” so ran the current of sombre reflection, as he pursued his way through Piccadilly, Leicester Square, and Long Acre — “that such awards happen elsewhere; I never knew that they were at all likely to befall in this world! Woe is me! I have not only thrown away love for a much smaller fortune than I might have enjoyed by holding love fast, but I have damned myself in her estimation. She

knows that I was at the Throstledale post-office, asking for, trying to intercept, that very letter, which my uncle has since given to her, and which she, and, of course, all of them have since read. And she knows that Falconer had just told me of the marvellous change in her position, when she met me rushing out of my own house. Then, my strangely prolonged absence day and night—my non-return! Then comes the uncle, who the very next morning had met me in Warwickshire—and how employed! Oh, derision! Oh, ignominy! It is all seen through like glass—my base surrender, my baser attempt to recall it—my vain struggles in the net of my own weaving! How I must be scorned! How Emily's lip curls at the thought of her old playmate! How my uncle chuckles! It is as if fiends had juggled with, and were now mocking poor Cuthbert Harding!"

Again he thought that, in the crowded

streets, and in the open daylight, somebody behind him, had laughed. He turned. Nobody answered to his idea.

“Since I helped Tom Falconer’s love, in money and in honour—since I hastened the day of his honest wishes by my purse, and stood between the peace of his single heart, and the attack of George Childering’s intended libertinism, at the risk of my life—I have never once been haunted by that old delusion, and does it now return?”

With a sort of gloomy defiance, he stood still under the little archway leading out of Great Queen Street into Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and he listened. All was silent, save the usual sounds of the never resting metropolis. Nothing seemed to mock at his last strange question. With a sigh of relief, he slowly resumed his way across Lincoln’s Inn Fields towards the imposing new hall.

“To meet Henrietta’s trustee!” mused Harding; “her money is in the funds, I

always understood. So much the better. Yet, if this ship had not vanished under the curse which seems to shrivel up, of late, whatever I touch, I should not need that charming girl's fortune, to ransom the awful parchment which lies somewhere hereabouts, and which threatens me like a witness at the judgment seat. And the day approaches! It must be done. Anything but that one exposure. I could not survive it a single minute. A straw could strike me dead, were it known. I, who have held my head so high! no; I would fly rather to the worst that is hidden beyond death, than submit, were it but once, to look mankind in the face, after this became known."

He had here, and for the first time, harboured so appalling and so accursed a thought, that, with his old experience and recollections, whether diseased or otherwise, he stood still again and listened. Oh, he was not in the least molested by any of

the sounds which he happened to hear. Nevertheless, a curious little thing affected him; if he did not hear a laugh, he imagined, as the memory of his conduct towards Tom Falconer again flitted for a mere instant through his mind, and that he heard a sigh, soft, long, and melancholy. He reasoned with himself, that it must have been his own—and began to think that, if his last speculation turned out badly, some young girl, perhaps, like Henrietta, would, through Mr. Rosebriar's villainy, be rendered portionless.

“And how her husband will be taken in, if he marries for the same motive as I do!” thought Harding. “But the speculation is not yet hopeless: and, if it do fail, why, some day, when I have brought my affairs round again, I will perhaps replace the money which Rosebriar's villainy, has dissipated.”

At Falconer's chambers, Harding found

the master of that abode, one or two clerks, and his old school friend, Geoffrey Mandeville. Sir Walter's presence was not necessary, and he did not like the affair well enough to come.

As Harding exchanged greetings with Geoffrey, he thought to himself—

“Yes, it is all very well ; but it was almost the toss up whether we fought or became brothers-in-law.”

Falconer explained that only the trustee was now waited for ; and Cuthbert was soon engaged in a conversation about old times with Geoffrey.

In the midst of it came a shuffling knock, and presently an eager, hungry eye was fluttering over every object in the chambers.

Cuthbert bounded from his chair—

“Why, Falconer,” he exclaimed, “you don't mean that this man is Miss Henrietta Mandeville's trustee ?”

Mr. Rosebriar, of an ashy paleness, and

trembling in every joint, looked fixedly at Cuthbert, and, half in supplication, half in menace, said—

“ You persuaded me ! You ! ”

It will naturally be supposed that both Falconer and Geoffrey were much astonished at this unintelligible cross fire of ejaculations.

The two culprits stared ruin at each other. Rosebriar dropped his eyes the first. Not a syllable was offered by either of the gentlemen in explanation. The day for the wedding had been fixed, and was at hand ; no remedy remained, even were that day put off—none, even were the marriage wholly put off *sine die*. Cuthbert saw not how this could at all mend his position now. Besides, it was not yet sure that Henrietta's fortune was quite lost.

Accordingly, the signing was regularly gone through—Falconer stealing a timid look at Cuthbert every now and then, while Geoffrey could not take his eyes off Mr.

Rosebriar, who was hardly able to hold his pen.

But we will spare the reader the details of that scene. We must also omit the equally striking scenes which preceded and which attended the bridal of Cuthbert and his wife, Henrietta Harding.

Enough that this event took place. The strictest privacy marked all its particulars. It was resolved that the bridegroom and his bride should proceed to Paris for the honeymoon, stopping a day, or what other length of time pleased them, on the road, at Cuthbert's town house in London.

Algernon was abroad—none but his father knew where, and the father would not say. It required something which should occupy a greater space in the public journals than Cuthbert's wedding, to let that gentleman know that Emily was free.

The arrangement just alluded to delighted Henrietta, and when Harding told her that

he expected very important news as they passed through town, that he could not go further without it, and that even their ulterior movements might depend on what he heard, she cheerfully acquiesced in the proposed delay.

The fact was that, on the evening of the wedding day, he reckoned on obtaining certain and decisive knowledge of what fate had attended Henrietta's fortune. On the following day, he had agreed with the firm who held the conveyance, that the deed was either to be sent by them to York for registration, or to be ransomed by him, out of their hands. Henrietta's fortune could have ransomed it thrice over—Emily's, ten times.

Such was the posture of affairs, as the bold and envied adventurer, the Member of Parliament, the disposer of other people's fates and fortunes—the "Money-spinner" pronounced in the country church, on that wedding morning, not far from the scenes

of his youthful hopes and dreams, the solemn words which killed them all as they still glowed feebly at the bottom of his secret heart, words which raked away the last smouldering embers of them for ever.

Returning to the park, to the wedding breakfast, he did that which he had never done in all his life before: he drank wine till the blood, or the mind, or both, in their mysterious union, sparkled in his brain like the foam of the champagne.

From the table he went to the carriage.

Cuthbert gave Henrietta his arm to assist her into her place. He then paused, lost in thought, his face pale as alabaster, his eyes glowing like carbuncles, and motioned to Rosalie, Henrietta's maid, to go inside and sit by her mistress.

"Are you going outside?" quoth Henrietta.

"The places are taken in the train," said Cuthbert, "for carriage and all; you will

not quit your present position till you reach my house in London, for the horses will be again harnessed at the terminus. As for me, my dear Henrietta, there is a train earlier by a few minutes than that in which you will travel. I will be at home before you to say welcome."

As he spoke he motioned to the coachman, and away sped the equipage. He, himself, made a groom dismount; he kissed hands to Henrietta, as he overtook and passed the carriage, careering onwards with a speed which it made her giddy to watch.

At Throstledale she saw him not. He had gone on, said the station master, to London.

At his fine house there, the hall door was wide open; a train of servants lined the way; Rosalie helped her young mistress into it. The bridegroom was not there to welcome the bride.

There was a note from him. He would

be at home in the evening. Oh ! that horrid business ! She had hoped he would cease “to be busy,” when she had granted him her hand.

The news which he expected, he could not bear to receive at home. He had gone to meet it. Moreover, he had contrived that all communications of any other nature which might meanwhile arrive for him, should forthwith be brought to a certain room in a certain hotel which overlooked the length of one of the mightiest of earth’s thoroughfares, and he proceeded thither to learn first the great intelligence.

He arrived, and alas ! soon knew the result for which he had waited. His bride had no longer a fortune. He sat long, looking forth upon the great torrent of human life and human passion which passed on beneath the window ; and he envied the dying and the dead.

During the whole afternoon and evening,

Henrietta waited patiently at home for him, in the drawing-room of the fine house. At first she remained alone ; at length she sent for Rosalie. It was dark, and he had not yet returned. It was beneath her dignity to question servants. In truth, when they entered the apartment, on one pretext or another, to steal a look at the beautiful bride, she put on an air, as though all was according to preconcerted arrangement. But Rosalie had been the attendant of her childhood. She soon sent for this old attendant to sit with her ; and gave orders that they were not to be disturbed, till the master of the house himself returned.

Accordingly, Rosalie came, and sat with her young mistress, far from the accustomed haunts, in that large, fine, strange drawing-room. At first Henrietta betrayed a little absence of mind ; then, by degrees, a little petulance ; then, slowly, a little alarm. But a great fear came upon her at last ; and

Rosalie could not reason that fear away. Henrietta wept violently ; wept in a passion of terror.

There was a great dog of the Mount St. Bernard kind in the drawing-room when she first entered it ; and the butler had apologized, saying, certainly that was not the usual place for the animal. But Mr. Harding had given strict orders that the dog was not to be allowed to follow him : and they had kept him in the hall till they heard the wedding-carriage stop at the door. Then they had, in their hurry, shut the dog into the drawing-room, lest he should break forth as soon as the hall door was opened. They would now take him down again. By no means, said Henrietta. She made friends with him ; and the dog expressed his approbation of her kindness in short, glad, deep monosyllables.

The dog lay down on the rug ; and as Henrietta and Rosalie conversed he began to

study them attentively, with very steadfast eyes, from between his fore paws.

As evening advanced, however, he rose from this place, went to the door, snuffed under it, and lay down before it, at precisely sufficient distance to allow it to open inwards.

Henrietta having expressed some vague misgivings which the lady's maid combated, Henrietta declared that in Cuthbert Harding's face, as she had last beheld him, when he was borne past the carriage, she had seen something which she had never noticed before ; it was something terrible, she said.

"La ! ma'am," replied Rosalie, "how can you go on so ? I am sure he looked quite as he ought, only a little tired and fagged, with a flush on the top of it."

"He is uneasy," said Henrietta. "What can make him uneasy ?"

"Fifty things," returned the attendant ; "perhaps it is some great money matter."

“I wish I could think so!” cried Henrietta, all radiant. She literally beamed with some sudden idea.

“Well, it is nothing else, ma’am, depend on it,” said Rosalie, who observed the favourable, the beneficial effect she had produced; “you know the name he goes by is the ‘Money-spinner,’ high and low—begging your pardon, at the same time, ma’am, that I should make so bold as to call my master any name but his own. It was not *me* gave it to him.”

“Ah!” said Henrietta, with a sigh, “that is true; and I, doubtless, can do nothing; what is anything *I* could do, in such——”

She did not finish the sentence; for the dog had sprung up with a sudden barking.

There had been no knock at the hall door. Harding had let himself in with a private key. A slow step approached; the drawing-

room door opened ; Henrietta flew into her husband's arms. Dismissing Rosalie with a gesture, she exclaimed—

“Cuthbert, you ought to ask my pardon.”

“I know it,” said he ; “I could not return sooner.”

“Oh, it is not for that,” she cried.

“Ah !” said he fearfully, “not for that ? Then—— But what do you mean ?”

“You talked of sailing from England to-day,” she said with an affectionate look.

“Oh !” replied he with some relief—
“true, I am not ready ; nor even to-morrow morning. But, to-morrow night, perhaps. Very possibly, to-morrow night.”

“You well know,” said she, slily, “that it is not these miserable trifles for which you should ask your Henrietta's pardon.”

He gazed at her in doubt, in fear, in consciousness.

“For what, then ?” asked he, after a pause, in a peremptory tone.

“Nay, if you frighten me,” replied she, “I shall never tell you.”

“I ought to ask your pardon for wearing my hat,” he said, taking it off, and fairly sinking into a chair.

“Cuthbert,” said she, solemnly, “some money matters annoy you.”

He started slightly—languidly; and looked at her without speaking, for again he envied the dying and the dead.

“How could you so misknow, miscomprehend Henrietta, your own Henrietta?” She pursued—“Have I not wealth? To me what signify marriage settlements, while my husband’s soul is tormented with secret disquietudes? Do you doubt me, Cuthbert? Do you think I would refuse you my signature to anything which might extricate you from trouble, from danger, from sadness? No doubt, Cuthbert,” she added, with a heavenly smile of confiding love—“in the great affairs of a man like you, a fortune

like mine can effect, perhaps, but little ; yet, even a little, I mean comparatively, may be of service ; and you are welcome to it all. I'll sign anything."

He covered his face with his hands.

"Nay, dearest," said she, putting her light hand upon his burning head ; "it is nothing. I am only too thankful if I can be of service to chase away the cloud from your face. My sole fear is that my fortune may not suffice."

Yes, yes ; her fortune would have sufficed three times over, if he, when Mr. Rosebriar had spoken of trust-money, had not sneered and sophisticated the sacredness of it away. Suppose he had only treated it as though it had concerned himself, merely doing for once as he would be done by ? But, because he did not see how it could effect his own interests, self was now without its last buckler. One thought of others then, and he would now have been safe ; one thought

of justice, and his policy had carried him through. Who could have supposed it? He would dispose of himself as he had proposed. "Ha ! ha ! ha !" No wonder if he dreamt that he was mocked at.

"Henrietta," said he, "you are like an angel, and I am like—what I may soon be. But it is useless. I have returned to tell you not to be alarmed if I do not return home to-night."

"I knew," interrupted she, half screaming, "that my fortune would not suffice. But there is my brother Geoffrey. I tell you, Cuthbert, he is generosity itself."

"Peace, peace, my too noble friend," cried poor Harding. "Peace ! peace !" repeated he, for whom there was peace no more.

She twined her hands together suppliantly and, looking upwards, cried—

"You little thought—you, the wealthy man—that the girl Henrietta's fortune was destined to save you. Oh, happy is the

opportunity ! Slight the sacrifice ! Cuthbert, I, too, when I have heard of your wealth, for which I never cared, little thought what a strange and pleasing destiny was reserved for us. You could not, with all your cleverness, have procured me a more exquisite enjoyment than this one reflection—that we two meet, and oh ! Cuthbert, that, contrary to the world's idea, I find you poor, and then I enrich you.”

“Find you,” echoed Cuthbert, with a ghastly stare, and very slowly ; “find you poor, and enrich you—find you rich, and ruin you—find—find——”

The haggard man dropped the broken speech, and turned towards her with a wan face, and a sweet, yet dreadful smile. He tried to speak, but could not. She exclaimed—

“Right ! conquer your chivalrous but misplaced pride. Attempt no refusals. Defraud me not of my gratification. Do you grudge

that Henrietta should owe so much to Cuthbert? Between you and me, you know, the rule that holds good is not only different from, but just precisely contrary to, that which prevails, among people of business, and in the cold, hard world. When a stranger puts money into your hand, the debt is yours; when Henrietta gives it to you, the debt is Henrietta's. Were my fortune only a thousand pounds, I should owe you but a trifling enjoyment in bestowing it; therefore, being what it is, and disposed of as it is, I pray you consider well what Henrietta, at this moment, owes to Cuthbert!"

"I am considering that very thing," replied he; and if the flaming sword of justice had been passed through his guilty soul, the wound could hardly have been more deep than that which those words of all-confiding love inflicted. "I am considering," he again murmured, "what Henrietta owes to Cuthbert."

By an almost superhuman effort, he braved out that awful interview to a decent close ; and confessing nothing, departed with an injunction that, on no account, must she allow herself to feel depressed, or even surprised, if, on the evening of this their wedding-day he found himself unable to return home again. Some time next day she should see him ; and meanwhile, she must have all in readiness for their journey to the continent. He went, the dog following him unregarded.

She retired to rest, alone, in the strange, fine house.

How, or where Harding passed that night, is not known. In the forenoon of the next day, he visited the same hotel where that room was reserved for his use, and asked if there were any letters for him.

“ Yes, sir,” replied the waiter : “ one letter ; I put it on the table in your room, myself ; and there is a gentleman, sir.”

Harding found Falconer waiting for him. The letter lay on the table ; he knew the handwriting. It was from the senior partner in the firm who held the deed, which was on that day, or never, to be ransomed. Ten thousand pounds, at least, were necessary for this ransom.

Opening the letter, with an excuse to Falconer, Harding found that he had given him till four p.m., to ransom the deed, failing which it would, that evening, be despatched to York, for registration. He put the letter in his pocket, and looked up.

“ I hardly knew you,” said Falconer ;
“ you cannot have slept—— ”

“ What do you want with me ? ” interrupted Harding. Falconer replied in alarm, and confusedly—

“ Why, Harding, you must pardon me. But you once rendered me a great service—and I am now a happy, married man,

with Lucy, by dint of patient perseverance——”

“What do you want with me?” said Harding.

Falconer resumed in increasing alarm—

“Where was I? Oh! at perseverance—well, the upshot of it is this, Harding: you look to me, lately, as if something were troubling you, and because you once helped me, I am now ready to help you with a small sum—it may be called the whole of my savings, and you are quite welcome to it—I mean, briefly, a thousand pounds, and no thanks whatever.”

Again, the smile, like a spasm, flitted over Harding’s face. Poor Falconer’s mite! What could it effect. This very day, ten times the amount were needful to keep the proud man out of the felon’s dock. And next month! To be sure, a little time was a wonderful matter to a man of Harding’s resources; but what could the tenth part of

the requisite sum—for the very day now passing—accomplish ?

“Can you spare me your time,” demanded Harding, “till four o’clock ?”

“I can and will,” returned Falconer.

“Come, then,” said Harding, who put on his hat ; and they left the room in silence.

The Mount St. Bernard dog followed, unregarded.

They reached the offices of the firm which held the deed.

“I find,” said Harding, “that, until Tuesday next, I must leave this deed in your hands.”

“Then,” said the senior partner, “it must go to York to-night.”

“No,” said Harding, “because, you see, the whole world would then know that I had borrowed money on a property which I had only just bought.”

“That is not our affair,” replied the senior partner, who could not know that, as he

spoke, and as Harding with a calm eye listened to him, an icy coldness, like a sword, passed through the listener's spine.

"But our understanding?" said Harding.

"Was for a fixed time; and the time is up, and the gratuitous margin to that time is up also," replied the senior partner, coldly watching the Money-spinner.

"Next week," said Harding, unmoved, "I can dispose of three hundred thousand pounds. To-day I have not your money, without losing a hundredfold."

"That is unfortunate," observed the senior partner with an increased coldness.

"Nay, I will confess this much," said Harding, "that I would even make you a present of what cash I have to-day, as a premium on your delay till Tuesday. Here are a thousand pounds for you to wait till Tuesday. Judge, then, whether it is not important to me—whether my motive is frivolous——"

He took out Falconer's money as he spoke. The senior partner pronounced sentence of death thus—

“Talk to me of anything but an affair utterly worked out and done with. You have till four o'clock.”

The Mount St. Bernard dog, which had been very impatient during this conference, here jumped upon Harding, placed his weighty paws on Harding's chest; and seeming to say, with his great eyes, “I am not my master's judge.”

The Money-spinner and Falconer withdrew; Falconer waited for Harding to speak, and Harding did not speak. At the same time, he did not seem to know whither they were to go next; and he did not go far. Before he got to the end of Chancery Lane, he turned and went back towards the chambers of the firm; he then halted, stood looking on the ground, lost in thought, for a moment; and, finally, resumed his pre-

vious direction. This manœuvre he repeated three times.

At length he went into Fleet Street and eastwards, Falconer not daring to break the silence between them, or to interrupt Harding's thoughts. Into several offices, one bank, and various places of business, Harding went alone, bidding Falconer wait for him in the street. In most of these cases, Falconer observed that Harding did not enter beyond the vestibule, or outer waiting-room, but came out again irresolute, and went away. Once, or twice, at most, he penetrated into the presence which sat within.

Always on emerging, he walked very fast, then half stopped, as though he had forgotten something ; but proceeded forward again immediately. Falconer noticed, too, that his pace was never the same for a minute at a time. Occasionally, Falconer could not keep up with him ; presently, he moved with the

utmost deliberation, stooping ; once or twice he halted altogether, lost in thought.

Perhaps an hour or more had been thus spent in silence, when they returned to Chancery Lane. Harding now spent another hour in going in and out of the office to which he had paid his first visit ; and always with the same success. Nay, Falconer could not help remarking that the more the senior partner of the firm noticed Harding's anxiety to prevent the deed from being sent that day to York, the more he seemed resolute to send it.

It was half-past two p.m., when Harding, with an "as you please, then," and a shrug of the shoulders, quitted the office after the last of these quickly iterated visits. He did not go far. He turned into a neighbouring tavern, and asked for a private room. The room looked upon the street. Harding went to the window, and stood there for some time ; suddenly, he recoiled as if he had been

shot. Falconer, who (still respecting his companion's silence) had also approached the window, looked out. There was a stoppage in the street. A lady in an open carriage was just turning her glance *away* from the window. Falconer fancied that he knew the face. Harding knew it well. That face had smiled joyously and gleefully upon him many times in the play of childhood. It was Emily's.

Harding, with a glance at his watch, exclaimed that it was past three, and seized his hat. Whither is he going, now? thought Falconer. Again to the office, where he had so often already been that day.

The senior partner was very civil; but he would not promise Harding to wait till Tuesday, nor till Monday; and during their conversation, a gentleman whom Harding did not know was bustling about the apartment, in a frock coat buttoned up to the chin. As the clock struck four, this gentle-

man took his hat, and, with a "good-bye," walked briskly out. Harding loitered a few minutes more ; and then saying "Come," to Falconer, departed. Returning to the tavern, he said, after nearly an hour's reverie—

"Falconer, you have heard and seen all that has passed. What think you? They will grant so reasonable a request?"

Falconer said nothing.

"Do you think the deed will be sent?" repeated Harding.

"Nay," said Falconer; "I think it *is* sent."

On hearing this, Harding hurried back to the office.

"It is gone, sir," said the principal. "That gentleman who took his leave while you were last here, is Mr. Castleton, the junior partner of this firm. He is now on his way to York. He has the deed on his person."

There are things which defy description ;

and the Money-spinner's glance, when this was said, is among them.

Once more, he returned to the private room of the tavern ; and the first remark which he made seemed to Falconer to be strange, weak, and puerile in the extreme, if not positively incongruous and unbecoming.

“What a strange noise, Falconer,” said he, “the wind has been making all day ! Have you noticed how angry the voice of it sounds ? And every now and then great sighs are borne past as if from distant shipwrecks out at sea.”

Harding sat down as he said this.

Falconer, who was still haunted by Cuthbert's face, such as he had for an instant beheld it in the office of the firm, and to whom that look was a sudden and dreadful revelation of something hitherto unsuspected, but now firmly, although most regretfully believed, replied, with as much sternness as was in his nature—

“The wind ! yes, a storm is coming ; the wind has been on the increase since last night. But what has that to do with the business at stake ?”

It had, however, some bearing upon it.

“Truly, nothing,” answered Harding ;
“and now, I suppose, you will leave me ?”

The dog, which had never quitted them, here thrust his nose into Cuthbert’s hand, lifting it off the knee where it rested.

“If I can be of service,” replied Falconer,
“friendship is more precious to me than time.”

“Of service !” echoed Cuthbert. “You have often served me, Tom, and oftener still desired to do so ; but I shall never trouble you again.”

“Never again ! What does that mean ?” said Tom, into whose eyes the tears came. He perceived, too, that Harding called him by his Christian name, which he had never done before.

Harding replied not, but gazed out of the window on the leaden sky, from which there poured a slant rain before a driving wind. They were lighting the lamps in the streets.

As Falconer got no answer to his question within any reasonable time, he put down his hat, which he had taken up, and began marching a little here and there in the room. After a long silence, during which Harding still gazed out of the window, and Falconer thus fidgeted, the latter stopped suddenly, and, hitting his right hand into his left, cried out—

“What does ‘never again,’ mean? Tell me that?”

Harding said nothing.

“Well!” pursued Falconer—“well? Eh? It is money, I know—and money be hanged. But what of that ship?”

Harding started.

“One would think,” said he, with a half smile, “from your energy, that you had

caught sight of her. Alas ! she was due months since."

"Well," said Falconer, stoutly, "she'll come yet."

"There has been, for some time," replied Harding, shaking his head, "a strange fatality upon all I attempt, and all that concerns me. Come yet ! Why, man, unless she were beating up the Thames, or, rather, mooring off the wharf this very hour, she would come too late, though she brought all the wealth of Ormus or of Ind, though deep in the water with Californian or Australian gold, though crammed with all the diamonds that ever issued from Golconda. No, no ! Too late, now, would be the whims of fortune in her most bounteous caprices—too late for *me* ! I have been fighting against a fatality—a fatality it is !"

"How do you know that ?" cried Falconer, heroically. "How do you know that it is not to try you, to humble you, and

then to save you, tried and humbled? Of course, perdition there is in such cases, for those who will not look at it in this light. But if you do——”

“Well, and if one does, what is there to gain?” said Harding.

“Three things,” replied Falconer (whose words deserve to be written in gold): “first, time; secondly, one chance more; thirdly, that then the result, whatever it be, is none of your own gratuitous hastening or making; which last, when it happens, is beyond human endurance. Remember that! It is plain. The worst of it is, in these cases, that after a man has long fought against fortune, he gets discouraged, and begins to fight, on fortune’s side, against himself. Thus, instead of prolonging the battle, he, in the first place, loses it for certain, when the loss of it was uncertain; in the second place, he loses it sooner; in the third place, he loses it by his own act.”

In the whole course of his acquaintance with Tom, Harding had never heard him express himself with such startling clearness, or such nervous energy and force ; and, accordingly, the appeal of his friend distracted him a moment from his gloom.

Tom proceeded—

“Have you thought of what ought to be done immediately, supposing, just for amusement’s sake, that you were not to lay down your arms ?”

Harding stared in silence.

“Just on that supposition, you know,” insisted Falconer.

“There would be,” replied Harding, with a sickly smile, “a telegraphic message to send, which should await Mr. Castleton’s arrival by the night train at York, and which should wholly prohibit his acting till receipt of another message.”

“Good,” replied Falconer. “I had not thought of that. You see you have gained

more than twice as much as you asked for in vain ; I mean, the day's delay. I suppose you know how to manage the message ? ”

“ It should come from the senior partner,” replied Harding, with more life ; “ or should seem so to come.”

“ Um ! ” said Tom, startled by the unscrupulous daring of the last words. “ Well ? —and then ? ”

Harding was plunged in study for a minute. What a world, in that one minute, the fleet mind traversed ! Two methods of escape presented themselves ; both of them feasible, if adopted, but neither of them to be adopted. Geoffrey was generous : but Harding could not survive the confession which must precede any appeal to that generosity. To prevent Geoffrey from knowing the case—nay, even if Geoffrey knew it (prevention hopeless)—Harding would have blown his own brains out.

The other measure was still more efficient ;

and it was still more out of the question, as the reader will easily imagine. Suppose he appealed to Emily, and told her everything? She would never more, indeed, esteem him; but she would infallibly deliver him. Oh! as to this, perdition itself seemed to his pride and his rage to be preferable.

Hastily but plainly setting before his own mind these two alternatives, he rejected them in succession, with the most complete repugnance and an irrevocable resolve. He then looked about for any other resource—any other means of deliverance—and found none. Coming to this conclusion with the utmost distinctness and self possession, he said, sighing heavily—

“There is no use in the telegraphic message. Precisely the same situation of affairs would return on Monday. I will not send the message.”

“Ah!” cried Falconer, “you hearken to a bad adviser—to despair. I see it in your face.”

“What could the delay do for me?” said Harding.

At that very moment, a ship of which he had given up all hope, was dropping anchor in the Thames, and sending word of the fact to the Money-spinner.

Falconer had no reply to the question. After a pause, Harding resumed—

“You asked me just now could you serve me? Well, you can. Go home as fast as a cab can take you; keep the cab at your door; make your wife get into it as soon as possible, and then drive straight with her to my house, and cheer my wife—be companions to her; she will be surprised and grieved, if not alarmed, at my not returning to-night. Business makes it impossible that I should. Tell her so——”

“Harding! Harding!” interrupted Tom, solemnly.

Cuthbert arose, took his hat, and said with a ghastly smile—

“Do you remember that day at Eton by the river? That beautiful summer day, when Geoffrey, you and I had the argument? Well, Tom, you had the best of it, though I did not admit it at the time. I allow it now, Tom. What a day was that! It is different now. How it rains! And hark! you hear this wind still. Well, good-bye, old comrade, good-bye. You’ll sometimes think of other times, and of—of your friend. Much will be said, and justly; yet, despite of this, you’ll—you’ll—now and then keep a thought for Harding.”

“Where are you going to?” cried Tom.

“It is time,” replied Harding. “It might have been otherwise; indeed, I had meant it otherwise. But it is time now. Where to? Have you ever seen a run with the buckhounds? Whither goes the wounded antler-bearer? whither at last? I am not the same that I was, observe. I never had

the course I wanted. My uncle is a worthy man—a worthy man. Tell him when you meet him, that his nephew's thoughts ran much upon him, lately—say lately. By-the-by, you are drawing up deeds, or something, for Miss Whitsund, that was—that is! Ha! ha! ha! Good-bye, Falconer! Good-bye, honest, dear Tom!”

And before Falconer could interpose he had issued from the door, locking it on the outside. The dog had broken nimbly out, even before the master. As Harding passed into the street, he called the waiter, and told him that the gentleman upstairs wanted him.

When Falconer was thus released, he could find no trace of Harding. Reflecting on the conversation which had just passed between them, he exclaimed—

“That powerful mind has gone at last; that strong brain has given way.”

Thus thinking, he hurried home; and,

taking his wife, as Harding had begged, drove with her to visit Henrietta. They found the fine house in commotion. A pressing telegraphic message had arrived for Harding, early in the day, from Southampton; and almost immediately before Falconer's appearance, a man of business from the City, whom Cuthbert often had employed, had come in the utmost eagerness to see him. In his absence, the visitor had, at last, demanded to speak with Mrs. Harding. Where was her husband? She could not say. But what was the matter?

Matter? Why a ship of his, long supposed to be lost, had just cast anchor in the river; her success had been beyond calculation—it was measureless—to Harding she brought, not one, but many fortunes. So enormous a stroke of luck had not happened in the memory of man.

Messengers were despatched in all directions for Harding; and Falconer, as the

last who had seen him, was closely cross-examined by Henrietta. Presentiment quickened her love into divination; and when Tom reported to her the words—"Whither goes the wounded antler-bearer?" she exclaimed—

"He alluded to a poem we have often read together. He is gone home, he is gone to—— Heavens! we shall be late! To the railway!—to the railway!"

* * * * *

At the station they found the trail, as would be said in Indian hunting.

"A gentleman taking a ticket for Throstledale, ma'am," said the railway clerk, whom Henrietta addressed. "Yes—by the half-past seven train, there was such a ticket—a dark gentleman, ma'am. Had he a large dog, ma'am?"

* * * * *

Cuthbert Harding had several adventures in his journey to Warwickshire, and after-

wards. Henrietta, Rosalie, and Mrs. Falconer, with her husband, the excellent Tom, had also some adventures in their own passage over the same road, two hours later. The flight and the pursuit had their vicissitudes of better and worse chances—of hopes rising and hopes sinking—of various passions undergoing rapid alternations.

With these three several subjects we have no time to do more than just to make this allusion to them.

* * * * *

On Heron Moss, under the grey crape of the mist, and a thin penetrating rain, as the night was about to struggle into the dim morning of the Christian Sabbath, sat the Money-spinner—alone in the world—alone, at least, for human fellowship. His dog was his sole companion. Harding had wandered forth from Lea Meadows (where none of his family then resided), after a slight and hasty meal, which old Humphrey

served. Seeking the loneliest places, he had, at length, reached Heron Moss; and there, overwhelmed with fatigue of mind and body, he threw himself on the damp ground, and took out the phial, which had long been his secret companion. The dog, thrusting his nose into the master's hand, displaced what it held, and a smaller circumstance than this has sufficed, ere now, to turn aside a purpose of which Nature has so just a horror. But Harding's was now too obstinately fixed. Meantime, he had been unintermittently pursued by his friend, Falconer, who had persuaded Henrietta to await at Lea Meadows the result of his search. He found Harding alive—announced the arrival of the ship, and asked him whether he was not right in counselling him not to despair?

“But the deed which has gone to York?” said Harding, faintly.

“I have sent a telegraphic message,”

returned Falconer, "which will stay everything. You have still time."

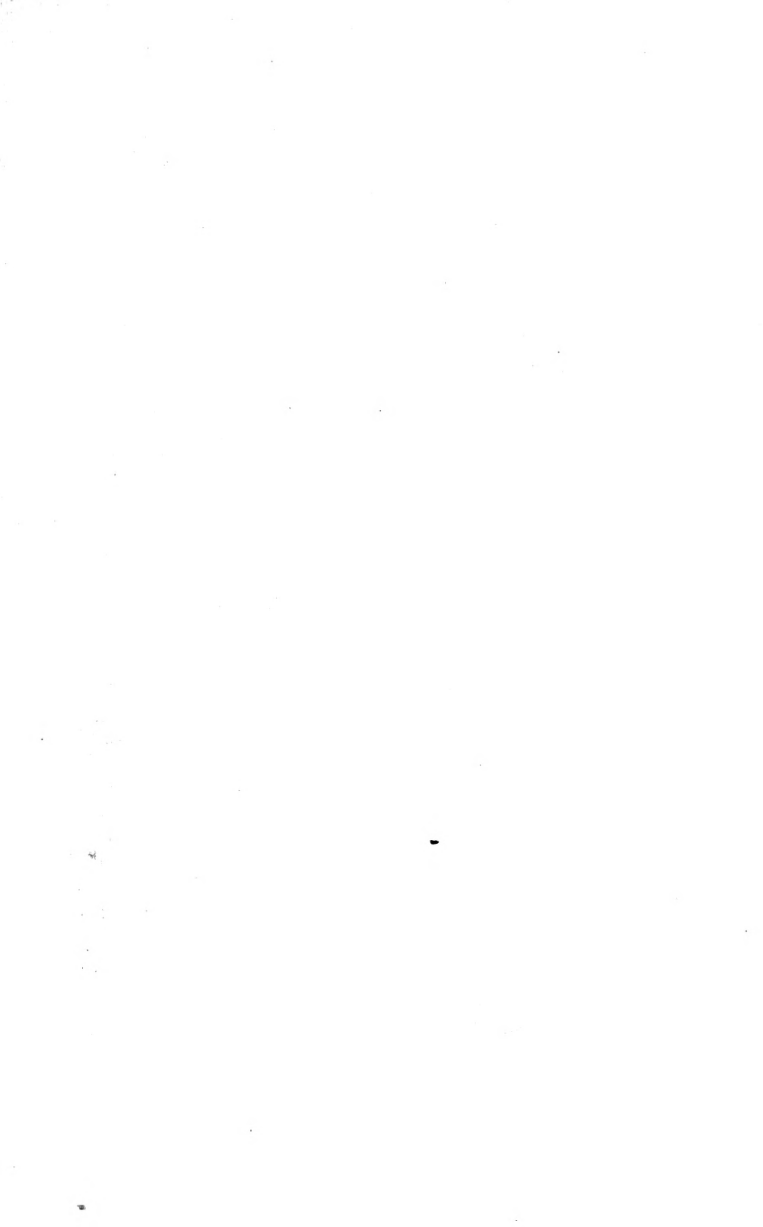
Harding tried to rise, but in vain.

"Well done, patience—well done, faith!" were the only words which Falconer could catch.

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In a very short time, the younger Mr. Childering learnt that the promise into which he had been surprised no longer fettered him: Emily Whitsund became his wife.

THE END.



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